



To: Committee Secretariat Justice Committee

Parliament Buildings Wellington

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SUBMISSION BY FOREST & BIRD YOUTH ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE TREATY OF WAITANGI BILL

Our Kaupapa

We are Ngā Māhuri Tiaki | Forest and Bird Youth, a nationwide network of rangatahi (aged 14-25 years) who are protecting and restoring Aotearoa's wildlife and wild places. Our vision is to see empowered rangatahi actively engaged in our connection to te taiao and in the fight for our future. Our mission is to act for nature as youth, with youth, and for youth and their interests in te taiao.

Given our kaupapa, we strongly oppose the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill and do not support a referendum as it negatively impacts Aotearoa as a whole. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is one of the strongest foundations of Aotearoa, symbolising inter-race harmony, a safeguard for our natural environment, and the value we hold upon our culture and its people - it is unique and precious to Aotearoa. This Bill does not honour or uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and poses to negatively impact our natural environment, our trust in the Crown and government, and our collective identity as a nation.

We take our stance on multiple fronts:

- € As conservationists, we are concerned with the future of our native taonga - our ngahere, moana, and other ecosystems (and the indigenous biodiversity within them) face an extremely grim future without the protection that Te Tiriti o Waitangi currently provides them;
- € As environmentalists, we know that Te Tiriti o Waitangi has safeguarded many of our natural resources, and the Bill endangers these safeguards and may open these resources up for exploitation and other interrelated crises, furthering environmental devastation in Aotearoa;
- € As a group of rangatahi Māori, Pākeha, and tauiwi across Aotearoa, we believe the Bill will cause intergenerational impacts on the environment and our collective and individual identities – which we, as rangatahi, will disproportionately face in the future;
- € As a representative of younger communities under the voting age, even though we cannot vote, we will suffer the many implications this Bill will impose longer than anyone else in Aotearoa.

The Bill Strips Necessary Environmental Protections

Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides much-needed protection for our environment to ensure our taonga remains pristine and sustainable for future generations. The Bill would leave our environment more vulnerable to exploitation – it competes with the Resource Management Act (RMA) on many fronts and can be interpreted in ways that would deny Māori rangatahi the right to step in, protect, and speak for their whenua and taonga. Aotearoa already faces rising sea levels and temperatures as well as degrading ecosystems. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is essential in reducing the environmental risk and ensuring Aotearoa and its indigenous flora and fauna is kept the same for our mokopuna.

If the Bill proceeds, our generation will face the pressure of adapting and fixing the additional destruction that will ensue. This time, we cannot blame ignorance for making such a grave mistake. Currently, DOC manages three hundred and five contaminated sites on the West Coast of the South Island alone, and such damage to our landscapes comes with a hefty price tag. Remediating the Tui coal site in the Coromandel has cost \$21.7 million! If the Bill goes ahead, us rangatahi will be left to suffer with the consequences of environmental destructions the Bill could cause long after any current politicians.

The Bill disregards Tikanga Māori and Māoritanga

Māori tikanga is the moral construct of Aotearoa, values such as Kaitiakitanga, guardianship of the environment; Kotahitanga, the unity of people; Manaakitanga, the kindness and support of one. Mātauranga Māori has a significant place in our cultural, scientific, and environmental practices, and as an environmental organisation, we see mātauranga Māori as an invaluable way to take up kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of the environment and bring about collective and inclusive responsibility for our natural environment and our indigenous biodiversity.

These values have not been reflected through the principles set out in the Bill. It is essential for the future generations to have the same mana around Māori tikanga as the ones who came before them. The Bill does not demonstrate this, and disregarding Māori tikanga and mātauranga Māori is going to be “role modelled” to the next generation as an example of how NOT to approach inter-race harmony, inclusivity, or cooperative work.

The Bill will damage the relationship between rangatahi and the Crown

We, Māori members of Forest and Bird Youth, consider we are the first generation to grow up in an environment where we feel like our cultural identity has been honoured by the government. This has happened from the countless hours of advocacy from our tipuna, and slowly repairing the relationship between Māori and Pākehā since the first government was formed. The Bill strips the trust and confidence this generation of Māori rangatahi has with the government. We cannot blame ignorance for not knowing where this will lead. There are generations where Aotearoa has had to suffer the consequences of having generations of Māori that do not have faith in the Crown itself to defend their Māori rights. The Bill will set back the journey of national reconciliation by decades. It disgraces the work of our ancestors who worked hard for inter-race unity between the people and government.

Te Tiriti was an agreement between Māori and the Crown, yet Māori were not properly consulted on this Bill. This is a breach of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to self-determination, to culture, identity, and language. Rangatahi were also not consulted: while this does not breach any laws or rights, as the main subgroup of the population that will disproportionately face the consequences of this Bill, this submission is one of the ways we can have our voices heard.

Not that we have not been staunching our voice! A majority of rangatahi today care about the sustainability of our country and its landscapes. This has been shown through

countless protests where tens of thousands of rangatahi through Aotearoa have protested over the past few years. Amongst other priorities, rangatahi have made it clear that we want climate action and stronger protection for our taiao. The nation rose to protest, 48,000 attending just one, with rangatahi Māori, Pākehā, and tauwiwi being well-represented within the masses. The Bill ignores this massive voice by posing principles that undermine the role of iwi and hapu in protecting whenua and taonga that rangatahi and elders alike want to protect and is specifically ignoring the voice of rangatahi across Aotearoa.

The future leaders of tomorrow are saying no. The disregard to not listen to tomorrow's changemakers not only puts us in the kind of world that we do not want to inherit but destroys the relationship between rangatahi and the government. The unity between will deteriorate because of the ignorance to not listen to our concerns about the Bill.

The Bill degrades Aotearoa's identity

Aotearoa and its people have a global reputation of how proud we collectively are of our culture and our pristine landscapes. The Bill damages both. The identity of Māori lays in our whenua, a place of belonging, where our tipuna once were and our whakapapa. It is not just land that "belongs" to us, it is sacred tapu that is our identity. The study by Awanui Te Huia at Victoria University in November 2015 "Perspectives towards Māori identity by Māori heritage language learners" shows Māori learners are more engaged, and more likely to pursue their passion of Te Reo Māori if they know and connect with their identity and whakapapa. The Bill could have a direct impact on Te Reo Māori learners and the identity of so many Māori as land is the base of an identity. Te Tiriti o Waitangi symbolises how much Aotearoa values our culture, the kotahitanga of our races. For us rangatahi, it validates the importance of being Māori, how we should be proud of our culture and whakapapa. The Bill removes the foundation where the pride from within our culture was built upon. The Bill allows the exploitation of these natural landscapes to be threatened, degrading our identity of how well we protect value our whenua. The Bill could tarnish our nation's reputation of cultural pride and pristine landscapes.

Conclusion

The Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill is deeply problematic and an affront to the agreement that was meant to protect tino rangatiratanga whilst being governed by the Crown. The Bill undermines the involvement, impact, and identity of rangatahi Māori in protecting te taiao, and the impact that Te Tiriti o Waitangi has in safeguarding our natural

environment, identity, kotahitanga, and pride of our people. We strongly oppose the Treaty Bill and do not support a referendum as it negatively impacts Aotearoa and recommend it be abolished entirely.

We rangatahi may not get the chance to vote on this, but we will be the generation that faces the pressure of rebuilding our tangata and whenua after the destruction this Bill will cause, longer than anyone else.