


A wide-angle photograph of the New Zealand Parliament buildings in Wellington. On the left is the modern, circular Parliament Chamber (the Beehive), which is partially covered in blue scaffolding. To its right is the historic, classical-style Parliament Buildings. In the foreground, there is a paved plaza with several palm trees and a large, vibrant rose garden with red and white flowers. A person is visible walking near the rose garden. The sky is overcast.

# New Zealand Parliament

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is the legislature of New Zealand, consisting of the Queen of New Zealand (Queen-in-Parliament) and the New Zealand House of Representatives. The Queen is usually represented by her governor-general. Before 1951, there was an upper chamber, the New Zealand Legislative Council. The New Zealand Parliament was established in 1854 and is one of the oldest continuously functioning legislatures in the world. It has met in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, since 1865. The House of Representatives normally consists of 120 members of Parliament (MPs), though sometimes more due to overhang seats. There are 71 MPs elected directly in electorate seats and the remainder are filled by list MPs based on each party's share of the total party vote. Māori were represented in Parliament from 1867, and in 1893 women gained the vote. Although elections can be called early, each three years Parliament is dissolved and goes up for reelection.



## Westminster model

The New Zealand Parliament is consciously modelled on the Westminster system of parliamentary representation, developed in the United Kingdom. This system can be traced back to the "Model Parliament" of 1295.

Over the centuries, parliaments progressively limited the power of the monarchy. The Bill of Rights 1688 (which has been ratified as law in New Zealand) established Parliament's role in law-making, taxation, and supply. Among its provisions, the Bill confirmed absolute freedom of speech in Parliament (see parliamentary privilege).

As early as 1846 the British settlers in New Zealand petitioned for self-government. The New Zealand Parliament was created by the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, an Act of the British Parliament, which established a bicameral legislature officially named the "General Assembly", but usually referred to as Parliament. It had a lower house, called the House of Representatives, and an upper house, called the Legislative Council. The members of the House were elected under the first-past-the-post (FPP) voting system, while those of the Council were appointed by the governor. The first members were sworn in on 24 May 1854 in Auckland.

Under the Constitution Act, legislative power was also conferred on New Zealand's provinces (originally six in number), each of which had its own elected provincial council. These provincial councils were able to legislate for their provinces on most subjects. However, New Zealand was never a federation comparable to Canada or Australia; Parliament could legislate concurrently with the provinces on any matter, and in the event of a conflict, the law passed by Parliament would prevail. Over a twenty-year period, political power was progressively centralised, and the provinces were abolished altogether in 1876.

Originally the New Zealand Parliament remained subordinate to the British Parliament, the supreme legislative authority for the entire British Empire—although, in practice, Britain's role was minimal from the 1890s. The New Zealand Parliament received progressively more control over New Zealand affairs through the passage of Imperial (British) laws such as the Colonial Laws Validity Act 1865, constitutional amendments, and an increasingly hands-off approach by the British government.


Beginning in the 1890s, when the New Zealand Liberal Party was established as the first formal political party in New Zealand, political power shifted from the House of Representatives to elections, parties and leaders. The conservative Reform Party was formed in 1909, and the New Zealand Labour Party in 1916. The New Zealand National Party emerged in 1936 from the amalgamation of Reform and a remnant of the Liberals, the United Party. As of the 2017 general election, the current parties represented in the House of Representatives are National, Labour, the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, New Zealand First, and the ACT Party.

Labour Member of Parliament Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan was the longest-serving female MP (1967–1996) and was also the first MP to give birth while serving in office.



The monarch of New Zealand – currently Queen Elizabeth II, represented in New Zealand by the Governor-General – is one of the components of Parliament. This results from the role of the monarch to sign into law (give Royal Assent to) the bills that have been passed by the House of Representatives. MPs must express their loyalty to the Queen and defer to her authority, as the Oath of Allegiance must be recited by all new parliamentarians before they may take their seat, and the official opposition is traditionally dubbed *Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition*.



The background image shows the interior of the New Zealand House of Representatives. It is a large, ornate room with a high, vaulted ceiling featuring skylights and decorative moldings. The room is filled with rows of green upholstered seats on both levels, facing each other. The walls are lined with wood paneling and large windows. Several large, reddish-brown columns support the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is formal and historic.

## **The Parliament does not have an upper house**

The Legislative Council was the first legislature of New Zealand, established by the Charter for Erecting the Colony of New Zealand on 16 November 1840, which saw New Zealand established as a Crown colony separate from New South Wales on 1 July 1841.

The House of Representatives was established as a lower house and has been the Parliament's sole house since 1951. As at 2018, the House consists of 120 members of Parliament (MPs), elected to a three-year term.

Ministers of the New Zealand Government are always drawn from amongst the members of the House of Representatives (before 1951, there were also ministers who sat in the Legislative Council). The government of the day, and by extension the prime minister, must achieve and maintain the support of the House in order to gain and remain in power.

## Senate proposals

In September 1950, the National government of Sidney Holland set up a constitutional reform committee to consider an alternative second chamber, chaired by Ronald Algie. A report produced by the committee in 1952 proposed a nominated Senate, with 32 members, appointed by leaders of the parties in the House of Representatives, according to the parties' strength in that House. Senators would serve for three-year-terms, and be eligible for reappointment.[39] The Senate would have the power to revise, initiate or delay legislation, to hear petitions, and to scrutinise regulations and Orders in Council, but the proposal was rejected by the Prime Minister and by the Labour opposition, which had refused to nominate members to the committee.

However, following objections from the Labour opposition, which derided it as a red herring, and other supporters of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) representation system, the Senate question was removed by the Select Committee on Electoral Reform.

In 2010, the New Zealand Policy Unit of the Centre for Independent Studies proposed a Senate in the context of the 2011 referendum on MMP. They proposed a proportionally-elected upper house made up 31 seats elected using a proportional list vote by region, with the House of Representatives elected by FPP and consisting of 79 seats.



## House and committees

Each bill goes through several stages before it becomes a law. The first stage is a mere formality known as the first reading, where it is introduced without a debate. This is followed by the second reading, where MPs debate on the general principles of the bill. If the House opposes the bill, it may vote to reject the bill.

If the bill goes through the second reading, it is sent to a select committee where every clause in the bill is examined. Members of Parliament who support the bill in principle but do not agree with certain clauses can propose amendments to those clauses at this stage. Following its report back to the House, the bill will be advanced to its third reading where only minor amendments will be allowed before it is passed or rejected.

## Royal Assent

If a bill passes its third reading, it is passed by the Clerk of the House of Representatives to the Governor-General, who will (assuming constitutional conventions are followed) grant Royal Assent as a matter of course. Some constitutional lawyers, such as Professor Philip Joseph, believe the governor-general does retain the power to refuse Royal Assent to bills in exceptional circumstances – specifically if democracy were to be abolished. Others, such as former law professor and Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Palmer and Professor Matthew Palmer argue any refusal of Royal Assent would cause a constitutional crisis.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

