



Taking Part in New Zealand is produced by:

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TAKING PART

Taking Part IN NEW ZEALAND



A guide to taking part for new New Zealanders.



ELECTIONS
ELECTORAL COMMISSION
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

You have a right to have a say.

You have a right to **have a say** in what happens in your neighbourhood, your community, and the country.

But it's more than a right. **Everyone needs to take part.** New Zealand is a democracy, and the decision makers running the country have to take everyone's views into account.



In New Zealand...

You can take part in many different ways:

- + Voting for people to represent your views, like your local Member of Parliament or your local councillor. (This is the only country where permanent residents as well as citizens can enrol and vote.)
- + Volunteering for or joining community organisations.
- + Attending community or public meetings.
- + Asking questions of the decision makers in your community.
- + Being part of a group that provides its views on decisions.

See the other pamphlets in the *Taking Part* pack for more information on how to take part.

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SPEAKING UP AT THE RIGHT TIME

Many organisations are happy to hear from you at any time. But sometimes you need to get involved at the right time to make changes to decisions. For example, if you don't agree with someone's plans to develop a property, the time to speak up is when the council decides on that person's application. Look out for opportunities to have your say from notices posted in places like community and library notice boards and in newspapers.

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+ EVERYONE'S VOICE COUNTS

Whoever you are, your voice counts. You may be born in New Zealand or another country. You may be young or old. You may be male or female. Whoever you are you can voice your views about the decisions that affect your daily life.

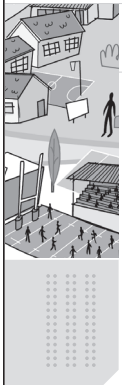
In New Zealand...

Young people, older people, both men and women, can share their own views. Often views within families are different. Even when you share the same backgrounds, values, beliefs and customs you may still have different views on some things. That's OK here! New Zealanders value the right to have different views.

Whatever their views, every person is encouraged to voice them.



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+ IT'S OK TO DISAGREE

Not everyone has the same views on issues. It's OK to let the people making decisions know that you disagree with them. In fact, it's an important part of how decisions get made in this country.

For example:

- + You may not agree with a decision made by the school your child attends. You can tell the school what you think.
- + You may not agree with a decision made by your local council. You can tell the council what you think.
- + You may not be happy with how you were treated at hospital or by a government department. You can tell them what you think.



GETTING YOUR POINT ACROSS

When you have your say, you will get your point across more easily if you:

- + stay calm
- + are polite
- + can explain your views briefly and clearly
- + show you are willing to listen to what the organisation has to say.

You can always take a support person with you to a meeting. Your support person can be there to help with the language or make you feel more confident. Some organisations can offer language support. You need to ask them about this before you meet with them.

You can also use Language Line (a telephone interpreting service) for phone contact with some government agencies. See www.languageline.govt.nz



In New Zealand...

Not only is it OK to disagree with them, many organisations have to help you tell them what you think. These organisations include:

- + government departments and agencies
- + local councils
- + hospitals and medical services
- + schools
- + businesses like banks and phone companies.

Such organisations have set steps you can follow when you have a problem with them. Some, like Work and Income, have a complaints process. Others have a feedback process. Most often these organisations have to tell you about the steps and help you work through them. You just need to ask.



+ IT'S ABOUT RESPECT

You have a right to be treated fairly and with respect – you can expect to get a fair hearing, whoever you are, whatever your views. Even new New Zealanders should expect to be treated the same as everyone else here.

Newcomers often want to do the 'right thing'. So do government agencies and many organisations and companies. Some, especially government agencies, ask groups of newcomers what they think of their services. They often provide information in a range of ways to meet the information needs of all New Zealanders, including young, older and disabled people.

In New Zealand...

If you are not getting a fair hearing, there are places that will help you with your concerns. New Zealand has **ombudsmen** who deal with problems with government agencies and local councils. Other bodies like the Human Rights Commission may also be able to help. And there are a number of organisations that can help with any problems you have with a private company.

Your local **Citizens Advice Bureau** can help you or direct you to some person or organisation that can. Look for them in the white pages telephone directory or see the website www.cab.org.nz



YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY

It's against the law for anyone to offer or accept a bribe or a private fee for providing public services that are normally provided free. A bribe is not just money. It can include gifts of value or the offer of a job.

INFORMATION IN YOUR LANGUAGE

Many government agencies and organisations and some companies provide information in other languages. Often this information is on their websites. See newzealand.govt.nz for a list of government websites.

Also see www.languageline.govt.nz about the free telephone interpreting service for contact with some government agencies.



+ YOU CAN HAVE SUPPORT

You can take a support person along with you to help you deal with an organisation. This can be a family member or a friend, or someone who can help you with the language. If you have a serious problem you can take along someone more official like a lawyer.

In New Zealand...

A number of organisations can provide you with information and advice:

- + the Settlement Support New Zealand network (see www.immigration.govt.nz/settlement)
- + Regional settlement support agencies like the Auckland Regional Migrant Services
- + Refugee and Migrant Services
- + Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) (see www.cab.org.nz)
- + Multilingual Information Service, an Auckland based CAB service (see www.cab.org.nz)
- + Community Law Centres for free help with legal matters (see www.communitylaw.org.nz)
- + Cultural or nationality groups – many bigger towns or cities have groups or associations of different cultures or nationalities that support newcomers.

Look for these organisations in the white pages telephone directory. Or look for their websites using Internet search engines like Google.





+ THINGS WON'T ALWAYS CHANGE

Sometimes when you tell people what you think, decisions will change. But sometimes they won't. That's because everyone gets to have their say and not everyone thinks the same.

In New Zealand...

Often, decisions will reflect what most people think. Other times decisions are made to serve the best interests of most people. This means things won't always go the way you think they should.

What do you do then? ...



+ Being new to New Zealand you might find the way we do things here a little different to what you are used to. There might be obvious things like the side of the road you drive on, school hours, or activities people get involved in outside work hours. But it's also the less obvious things like how we take part in the decisions that affect each of us in our daily life.

+ **This brochure explains your rights and responsibilities for having a say on the decisions that affect you.**

+ YOU CAN BECOME A DECISION MAKER YOURSELF!

As a new New Zealander you have an equal right to become a decision maker. You can become a community group board member, a Member of Parliament, or a local councillor. (You must be a New Zealand citizen to be a Member of Parliament or a councillor.)

In New Zealand...

Decision makers play a part in all levels of society. School boards of trustees decide how schools are run. Local trusts, community groups and councils decide how communities are run. And Members of Parliament decide how the country is run. Sometimes you have to volunteer your time for free. Other decision makers are paid.

See *Express Yourself* in the *Taking Part* pack for information on how you can become a decision maker.

Taking Part
IN NEW
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