



NCIWR's submission on the Regulatory Standards Bill

The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges | Ngā Whare Whakaruruhau o Aotearoa (NCIWR) is the largest family violence organisation in Aotearoa. We are a non-governmental organisation and have delivered services to women, children, families, and whānau affected by family violence for over 50 years. We represent both victims of family violence, specifically wāhine and tamariki who are the primary groups subjected to and impacted by family violence, and our 41 affiliated Women's Refuges who provide support and advocacy for our clients.

The constitution of NCIWR makes clear our commitment to parallel development, upholding our obligations under te Tiriti o Waitangi, and providing specialised services and refuge for all women and non-binary victims of family violence. The proposed Regulatory Standards Bill threatens these values.

- **NCIWR strongly and adamantly opposes the Regulatory Standards Bill.**
- **NCIWR recommends that the bill be thrown out immediately.**

The Regulatory Standards Bill breaches Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Government, in supporting the bill thus far, and under urgency no less, has communicated a lack of intention by the Crown to uphold New Zealand's framework of governance – Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The actions of the Government in regard to this bill so far position itself as an unwilling, inequitable, and unjust treaty partner¹. This positioning is dangerous, offensive, divisive, and unnecessary, and represents a threat to the fabric of New Zealand's democracy.

The Regulatory Standards Bill fundamentally undermines Te Tiriti. This is yet another proposed piece of legislation that is an ongoing act of colonisation towards Māori.

- Undermining the principle of tino rangatiratanga is colonisation.
- Breaching the Crown's obligations to Māori is colonisation.
- Not consulting with tangata whenua, as one of the two partners in the Treaty, is colonisation.

The proposal of the Regulatory Standards Bill is yet more evidence that colonisation is not just historic, it is ongoing: it is embedded into, and fostered by, the institutions, systems, and social fabric of Aotearoa. NCIWR finds this deeply concerning as

¹ Waitangi Tribunal. (2025). *The Interim Regulatory Standards Bill Urgent Report* (Report Number Wai 3470). https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_230792542/RS%20Bill%20W.pdf



colonisation, ongoing colonial violence, and gender inequality (which is also a byproduct of colonisation) are evidenced as being key drivers of family violence in Aotearoa².

Māori are principally and disproportionately harmed by colonisation in Aotearoa. When whole groups are treated as lesser, our society puts members of those groups at high risk of mistreatment by others. While anyone can experience and be victimised by family violence, it has the most severe and long-lasting impacts on those whose social and structural power is already undermined by systemic inequalities that position certain groups as less worthy, less included, and less protected, for example wāhine and tamariki Māori³.

In addition, the impacts of this victimisation are also unequally distributed, as wāhine and tamariki Māori can often be entrapped and harmed by both family violence and ongoing state violence. Each of these forms of violence then reinforce the harms of the other.⁴

As such, the attacks on Te Tiriti within this bill will amplify inequities faced by Māori and, by extension, the risk to Māori women and children, leading to further family violence victimisation and health consequences. Given that family violence is the leading cause of disease burden for women of reproductive age, the associated costs to the State are immense. The personal costs to victims are, of course, even greater.

Our workforce is familiar with and enmeshed within these conditions of inequality and the injustice that it creates. Witnessing the Government support and attempt to further embed inequities and exacerbate the risk, harm, and hardship that our clients will be subjected to is an arduous task. But we will continue to stand against policy that undermines the rights of Māori, violates the essence of Te Tiriti, and fuels the conditions that give rise to New Zealand's horrific rates of violence against women and children.

The Regulatory Standards Bill ignores the importance of equity

One of the core aims of NCIWR is *promoting social and institutional change that supports the rights of all to be free from oppression*. Striving for equity, **to be fair and just in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities**, needs to be understood and recognised as the first step in combatting oppression. The Regulatory Standards Bill prioritises equality over equity which, as Figure 1 succinctly illustrates,

² Pihama, L., Smith, L.T., Simmonds, S., Raumati, N., Smith, C.W., Cassidy, B., Te Nana, R. & Sio, B. (2023). *He Waka Eke Noa: Māori Cultural Frameworks for Violence Prevention and Intervention*. Taranaki: Tū Tama Wahine o Taranaki.

³ Hoeata, C., Nikora, L. W., & Li, W. (2011). Māori women and intimate partner violence: Some sociocultural influences. *MAI Review*, 3, 1-12. <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/6041>

⁴ Pihama, L., Cameron, N., & Te Nana, R. (2019). *Historical Trauma and whānau violence, Issues Paper 15*. New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse. <https://nzfvc.org.nz/issues-paper15-historical-trauma>
Wilson, D. (2023). *Violence within whānau and mahi tūkino – A litany of sound revisited*. Te Pūkotahitanga – Tangata Whenua Advisory Group for the Minister of the Prevention of Family Violence and Sexual Violence: Wellington, New Zealand.

means that those with the greatest need will go without. This will amplify and exacerbate social disparities across the motu and is a form of institutional oppression.

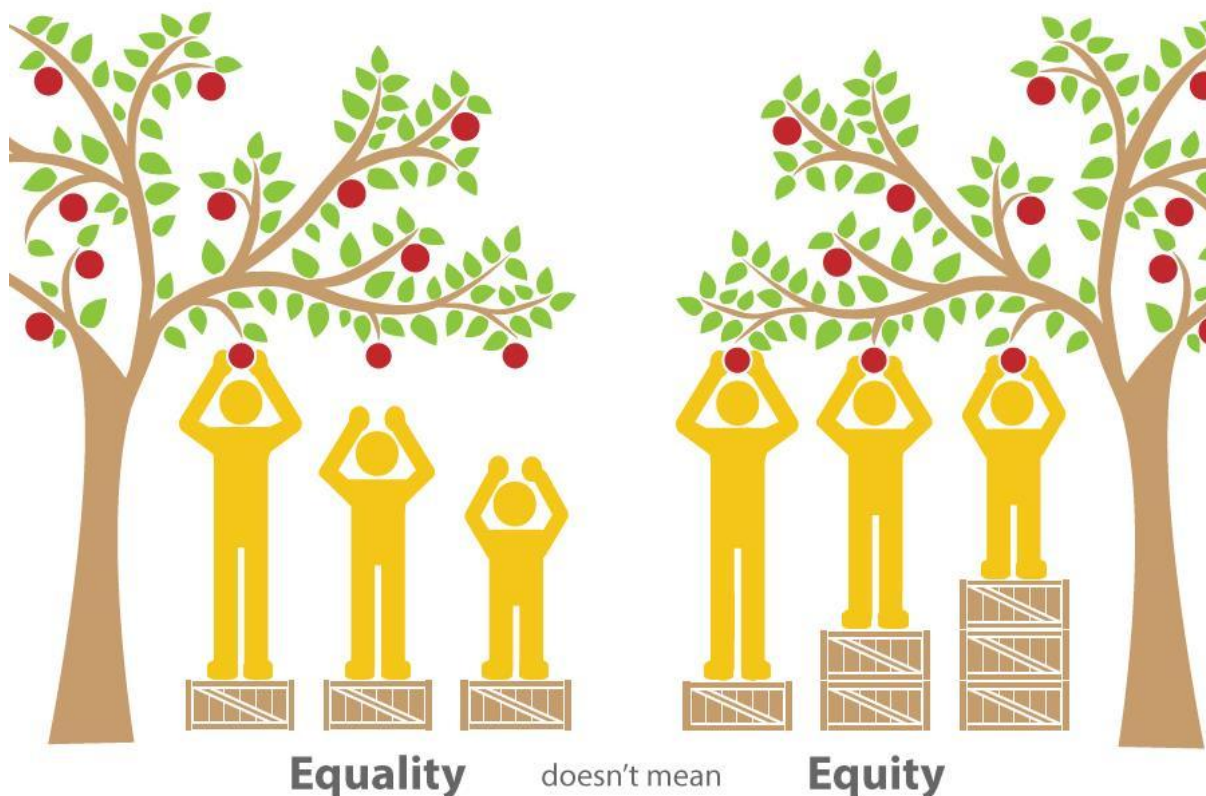


Figure 1. Equity vs. Equality

The bill prioritises the interests of the wealthiest in society and the interests of corporations and weakens protections for those who need them most. This will negatively impact:

- Women,
- Māori,
- Pasifika,
- disabled people,
- people struggling economically, and
- social and ethnic minority groups.

NCIWR **strongly opposes** this attempt to rollback efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society by erasing collective social protections.

The Regulatory Standards Bill threatens democratic process

At NCIWR our specialty is recognising and addressing situations where there are imbalances of power and control, as such it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge



the broader circumstances in which this consultation is occurring. The bill is part of a wider political pattern that weakens democratic processes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The current iteration of this bill marks the **fourth** time that the Act Party has tried to introduce its regulatory principles into the framework of government decision making. The continuous reintroduction of this piece of legislation, deemed “a dangerous constitutional shift” by past MPs, and rejected by multiple Parliaments, makes a mockery of democracy.

Further, the consultation process has undermined democratic participation, firstly, by conducting the first reading under urgency **despite** the unpopular and contentious nature of the bill. In the December/January submission period 22,000 submissions were made, of which 88% were in opposition, and 13,000 claimants were party to the Waitangi Tribunal inquiry. Secondly, the current Minister for Regulation has been actively undermining democratic process throughout the consultation period. The Minister has made unsubstantiated comments about online submissions opposing the bill coming from “bots”⁵, actively contributing to the spread of misinformation. He has also spent the week prior to submissions closing directing targeted online harassment towards scholars who oppose the bill – whom he has labelled “Victim[s] of the Day”⁶. Given the Minister has a vested interest in this bill passing his public attacks on those who disagree with him shows a complete disinterest in gauging public opinion on this legislation. Lastly, the documents provided for consultation failed to disclose the fundamental constitutional impacts of the bill – this lack of transparency is counter to good democratic process.

In conclusion, the Regulatory Standards Bill would allow the principles of the Act Party to have a greater influence than Te Tiriti o Waitangi, creating an extraordinary constitutional crisis. It would trample over collective social protections designed to protect our most vulnerable members of society and it would further oppression. Lastly, it would give undue power to the Ministry and Minister of Regulation and a board of their selection thus reducing democratic accountability.

Recommendations

NCIWR recommends that the bill be **thrown out immediately**.

⁵ Stewart, E. (2024, Jun 4). ACT leader David Seymour suggested 'bots' drove 'fake submissions' against his Regulatory Standards Bill. *Radio New Zealand*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/562990/act-leader-david-seymour-suggested-bots-drove-fake-submissions-against-his-regulatory-standards-bill>

⁶ Salmond, A. (2025, Jun 23). Anne Salmond: Victim of the Day. *Newsroom*. <https://newsroom.co.nz/2025/06/23/anne-salmond-victim-of-the-day/>