

Media Release: All Main Parties affirm New Zealand’s Membership of the Open Government Partnership

4 October 2023

In responses to a survey, all the main political parties gave a strong thumbs up for New Zealand’s continuing membership of Open Government Partnership (OGP).

The survey was conducted on behalf of 8 civil society organisations, and individuals who have served on the Public Service Commission’s OGP Expert Advisory Panel. It asked the 6 political parties likely to have MPs elected to Parliament in October 2023 to confirm their support for New Zealand remaining a member of the Partnership, and if they would provide the ministerial leadership and sufficient resourcing that are key to getting the greatest benefit from our membership.

The Survey asked three yes-no questions to ascertain:

1. Your party’s support for continuing New Zealand’s membership of the Open Government Partnership
2. That your cabinet would support strong ministerial leadership during the co-creation of Open Government Action Plan commitments
3. That your government would support the effective delivery of commitments, ensuring that they are appropriately resourced.

Survey Results

Party	ACT	GRN	LAB	NAT	NZ1st	Māori
(1) Your party’s support for continuing New Zealand’s membership of the Open Government Partnership	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
(2) That your cabinet would support strong ministerial leadership during the co-creation of Open Government Action Plan commitments	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
(3) That your government would support the effective delivery of commitments, ensuring that they are appropriately resourced	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Comments by the Political Parties

Some respondents added comments. The quickest to respond was Te Pāti Māori, which said: “Te Pāti Māori answers YES to all options.”

ACT told us that it “is concerned at the erosion of the Official Information Act in recent years, with a culture of secrecy and impunity becoming apparent in the public service and ministers’ offices. The long-standing review by the Ministry of Justice needs to be accelerated and the OIA given teeth. ACT supports open government, and participating in international organisations and with NGOs reinforces that.”

The Green Party said that it “confirms our support for all 3 of the points below.”

The National Party said that it “remains committed to New Zealand's participation in the Open Government Partnership, a membership we proudly entered back in 2014.”

The Labour Party told us: “Thanks for your questions. The Labour Party's response to all three questions is YES, YES, YES.”

The New Zealand First Party responded that “the answer to your three questions are all yes.”

Reactions from Civil Society Organisations and former Expert Advisory Panel members

Former Expert Advisory Panel member Suzanne Snively said, “After 9 years learning from experience of 4 OGP National Action Plans, the next Government will have the unanimous support of Parliament to resource commitments co-created with the public so that they are engaging, energised and effective.”

Simon Wright, another former Expert Advisory Panel member and Chair of Trust Democracy said, “the legitimacy of, and public trust in, democracy is declining globally. New Zealand is not immune to this. With cross-party support, the government can use its OGP membership to strengthen our democracy and make the most of local and international experience to improve policy and service delivery through enhanced public participation, accountability and transparency.”

Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties, Andrew Ecclestone, said “It’s great to see all our main political parties committed to membership of the OGP. The key task for the next government will be to secure high quality results and to ensure membership results in real change across government. This depends on strong ministerial leadership and Cabinet support, as well as the proper resourcing of new pieces of work in the Action Plans.”

Sacha Green, Citizens Advice Bureau National Advisor said, “As a cornerstone civil society organisation in Aotearoa, Citizens Advice Bureau sees the barriers people face in understanding and engaging with government. We believe the OGP is a vital mechanism for helping governments to be more open, transparent, effective and accountable to the communities they serve. Our organisation has worked tirelessly to secure a commitment in the current OGP National Action Plan, seeking a genuine response to our call for inclusive public services. We are pleased that all major political parties have stated their intent to not only support New Zealand’s continued membership of the OGP, but also to provide leadership and resourcing to back this up, so that commitments can be delivered on.”

Julie Haggie, Chief Executive of Transparency International New Zealand said, “Transparency International New Zealand is heartened to see support from leading New Zealand political parties for OGP to continue, including for both ministerial leadership and funding. Support from the top is so important to make this more than a tick box approach to OGP commitments. OGP as it should work generates a better democracy, with more active civil society engagement. To make it a success beyond promises we need political champions, public sector support, and trust. Overseas models of OGP show that genuine partnership comes from government and civil society stepping out of their respective comfort zones, and working together.”

Belonging to OGP Matters

New Zealand has been a member of the Open Government Partnership (the Partnership) since 2014. Then, Prime Minister John Key committed New Zealand to joining when requested by his political colleague, the UK PM, David Cameron. The Partnership is a multilateral initiative focussed on strengthening public policy, service design, and building a stronger democracy.

It was formed in 2011 by eight founding countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States. New Zealand was invited to be an inaugural member.

The Partnership was founded on the idea that better outcomes for the voting and taxpaying public are achieved when government is more open, participatory, and accountable. Its core principles are consistent with the cornerstones of New Zealand's democracy.

Membership of the Partnership Increases Effectiveness and Efficiency of Democratic Government

In OGP member countries, the government and the public (often represented by civil society organisations) work in partnership to co-create National Action Plans made up of several projects (called 'commitments'). Members learn from each other about ways to achieve better results (and improve wellbeing) faster.

At the OGP Global Summit in September 2023, the USA renewed its commitment to the OGP, pledging US\$3 million for OGP programmes. The European Commissioner for International Partnerships similarly pledged €3 million. They clearly see the OGP as a key tool for countries to verifiably lift their performance on public service delivery and governance.

The OGP now has over a decade's worth of research that demonstrates that commitments which are genuinely co-created between government and the community have better results. At the 2023 Summit, the OGP announced an additional mechanism of Open Government Challenges. This enables some of the major issues facing democracies around the world to be addressed.

The 8 civil society organisations who supported the survey were [Environment and Conservation Organisations of NZ](#), [Citizens Advice Bureau](#), [NZ Council for Civil Liberties](#), [Network Waitangi Ōtautahi](#), [Public Service Association](#), [Transparency International NZ](#), [Trust Democracy](#) and [Volunteering New Zealand](#).

You can read more about New Zealand's OGP work at www.ogp.org.nz

OPEN GOVERNMENT DECLARATION(*Summarised*)

September 2011

As members of the Open Government Partnership,,,:

We acknowledge that people all around the world are demanding more openness in government. They are calling for greater civic participation in public affairs, and seeking ways to make their governments more transparent, responsive, accountable, and effective.

We recognize that countries are at different stages in their efforts to promote openness in government, and that each of us pursues an approach consistent with our national priorities and circumstances and the aspirations of our citizens.

We accept responsibility for seizing this moment to strengthen our commitments to promote transparency, fight corruption, empower citizens, and harness the power of new technologies to make government more effective and accountable.

We uphold the value of openness in our engagement with citizens to improve services, manage public resources, promote innovation, and create safer communities. We embrace principles of transparency and open government with a view toward achieving greater prosperity, well-being, and human dignity in our own countries and in an increasingly interconnected world.

Together, we declare our commitment to:

Increase the availability of information about governmental activities.

Governments collect and hold information on behalf of people, and citizens have a right to seek information about governmental activities. We commit to promoting increased access to information and disclosure about governmental activities at every level of government... We commit to seeking feedback from the public to identify the information of greatest value to them, and pledge to take such feedback into account to the maximum extent possible.

Support civic participation.

We value public participation of all people, equally and without discrimination, in decision making and policy formulation. ... We commit to creating mechanisms to enable greater collaboration between governments and civil society organizations and businesses.

Implement the highest standards of professional integrity throughout our administrations.

Accountable government requires high ethical standards and codes of conduct for public officials. ... We commit to increasing deterrents against bribery and other forms of corruption in the public and private sectors, as well as to sharing information and expertise.

Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability.

New technologies offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration. ... We also recognize that increasing access to technology entails supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use it...

We acknowledge that open government is a process that requires ongoing and sustained commitment. We commit to reporting publicly on actions undertaken to realize these principles, to

consulting with the public on their implementation, and to updating our commitments in light of new challenges and opportunities.

We pledge to lead by example ... Our goal is to foster innovation and spur progress... We stress the importance to the promotion of openness of a comprehensive approach and the availability of technical assistance to support capacity- and institution-building.

Source: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/>