



## He ratonga tūmatanui e kotahi ana A unified public service

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A unified public service that acts as one team, with a spirit of service to the community, will lead to more joined-up, effective services and improved wellbeing outcomes for all New Zealanders.

### Ngā whakataunga matua | Major decisions

The new Public Service Act 2020 (the Act):

- helps to create a unified public service with a common purpose, upholding foundational principles and embodying our core values;
- makes appropriate chief executives and boards of Crown agents responsible for upholding the principles;
- acknowledges a spirit of service as fundamental to the public service and
- reaffirms the term ‘the public service’ to include Crown agents (for the above purposes).

### Ka pēhea mō ngā kaimahi tūmatanui | What it means for public servants

The Act affirms and clarifies the purpose and foundational principles and values for all public servants. It highlights acting with a spirit of service to the community as the fundamental characteristic of the public service and requires public service leaders and boards to nurture the spirit of service that their staff bring to their work.

The Act captures why the public service exists and how it fits into New Zealand’s system of government, as well as enshrining the five foundational public service principles and expected behaviours that support the integrity of the public service.

Strengthening the shared identity of public servants is intended to unite them in their goal of serving New Zealanders, regardless of which agency they work in. This will help to drive the cultural shift to build a unified public service that can quickly mobilise across the sector to tackle specific issues and deliver better outcomes for New Zealanders.

The unified public service provisions of the Act extend to Crown agents, many of which provide core public services in areas like health, education, transport and housing. They give effect to government policy and often need to work closely with other public service agencies.

## Ngā pātai me ngā whakautu | Questions and answers

### What is the common purpose of the public service?

The Act confirms the purpose of the public service:

“The public service supports constitutional and democratic government, enables both the current Government and successive governments to develop and implement their policies, delivers high-quality and efficient public services, supports the Government to pursue the long-term public interest, facilitates active citizenship, and acts in accordance with the law.”

- Section 11, Public Service Act 2020.

### What are the five public service principles?

The five principles are: politically neutral, free and frank advice to Ministers, merit-based appointments, open government and stewardship.

Although these principles have been in operation across the public service for some time, they have now been more explicitly formalised through the Act.

### What are the values?

The five values are: impartial, accountable, trustworthy, respectful, and responsive.

### What is the difference between principles and values?

The principles are fundamental features of the way in which the public service operates. The values describe the necessary behaviours of public servants to maintain the integrity of the public service.

### Why put the purpose, principles and values for the public service into law?

It preserves them as part of our legislative framework and underscores how important they are. It also gives a much stronger and clearer signal to both the public and those working within the public service regarding the behaviours that are expected of all public servants and public service agencies.

### Who is responsible for upholding the principles?

Public service chief executives and boards of Crown agents are responsible for ensuring the principles are upheld in their agencies.

### What happens if someone breaches a value?

The public service values are given effect through minimum standards set by the Public Service Commissioner. Minimum standards may be binding on public servants as terms of their employment. Behaviours inconsistent with minimum standards would be addressed through employment management processes within an agency.



## Why are Crown agents now included in the public service?

Of the Crown entities, Crown agents are closest to government. They give effect to government policy, include core public-facing service delivery, and often need to work closely with public service departments to deliver public services. It makes sense for all Crown agents and public service agencies to be unified under a common purpose and common principles and values.

## What does this mean for Crown agents?

Under the new Act, Crown agents are now bound by the same purpose, principles and values as public service departments and other public service agencies. Boards of Crown agents are responsible for ensuring that the entities they govern uphold the public service principles.

## Which organisations are in the Crown agents group?

There are 46. They include all 20 district health boards, Accident Compensation Corporation, Kāinga Ora, Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Tertiary Education Commission, and PHARMAC.

## Have the legal status or decision-making powers of Crown agents changed?

No. The provisions in the new Act are about strengthening the shared identity and underlying behavioural foundations of all public servants – regardless of where they work. It's aimed at bringing them closer together in the goal of serving New Zealanders, without fundamentally changing the governance of individual agencies. Their status remains the same under the Crown Entities Act.