

About the Author

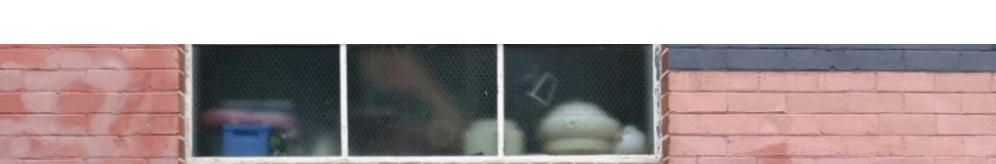


Dr Muriel Newman

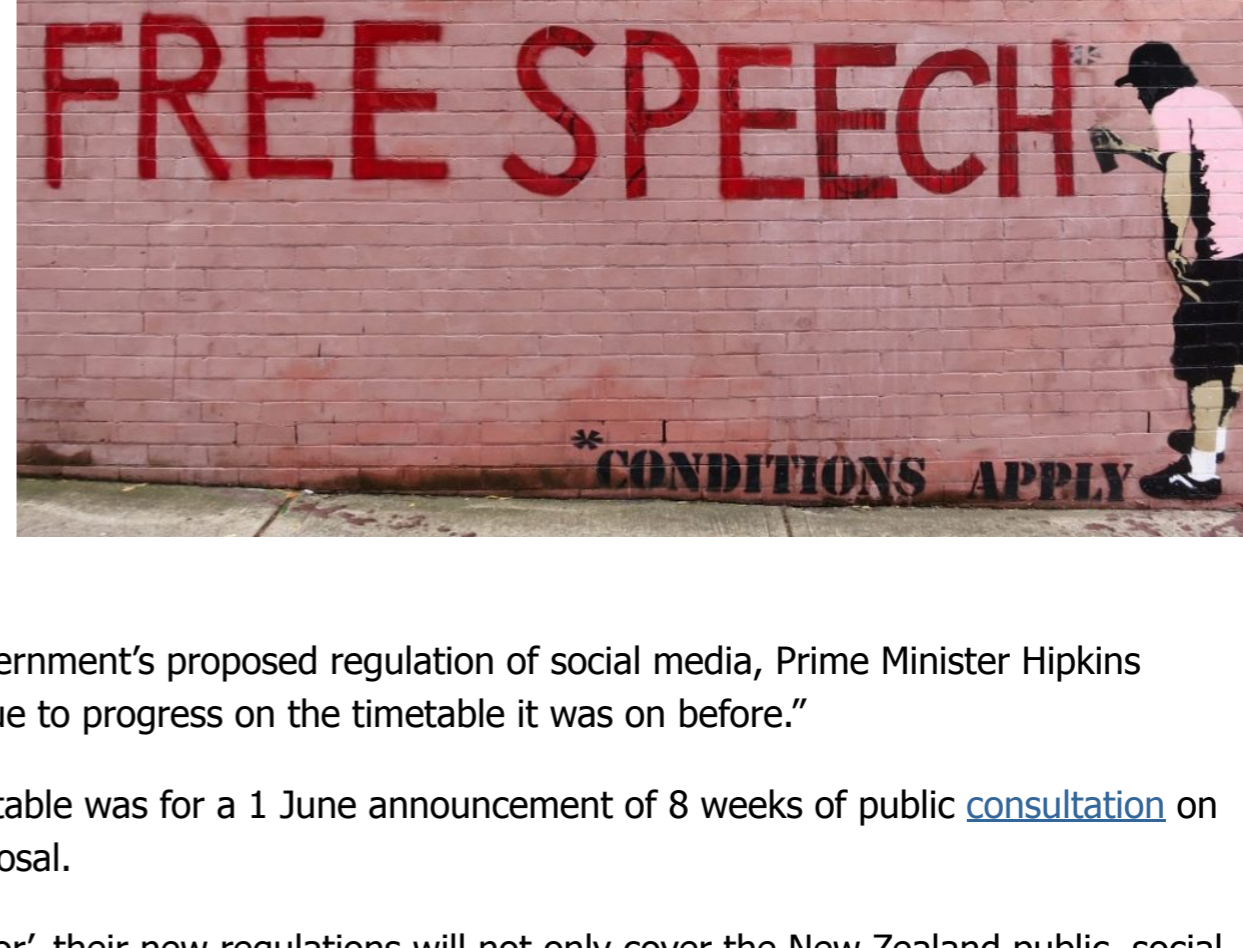
Dr Muriel Newman established the New Zealand Centre for Political Research as a public policy think tank in 2005 after nine years as a Member of Parliament. A former Chamber of Commerce President, her background is in business and education.

Media Freedom to be Muzzled

Posted on [June 11, 2023](#)
By [Dr Muriel Newman](#)



At a post-Cabinet press conference on the 8th of February, just two weeks after becoming New Zealand's 41st Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins announced that Labour's proposed hate speech legislation would be withdrawn and the matter referred to the Law Commission.



He explained the Law Commission had "a good track record of developing guidance on difficult issues."

The *real* reason the legislation was dumped was, of course, its unpopularity with voters. For a new PM desperately trying to win an election, abandoning it was the only sensible thing to do.

When asked by the media about the timing of the Government's proposed regulation of social media, Prime Minister Hipkins confirmed no changes had been made – it "will continue to progress on the timetable it was on before."

We now know the Department of Internal Affairs' timetable was for a 1 June announcement of 8 weeks of public [consultation](#) on their "Safer Online Services and Media Platforms" proposal.

Immediately described as 'hate speech by the back door', their new regulations will not only cover the New Zealand public, social media companies, on-line platforms, films, and gaming, but the mainstream media as well.

Quite why such a controversial crackdown on free speech would be released so close to an election is hard to fathom, especially as any legislation would not be introduced until 2024 – and only if Labour is returned to government. Perhaps the inexperienced new Minister and first term MP Barbara Edmonds did not recognise the political danger.

The DIA proposal is far reaching. It involves the establishment of a new Government regulator – already dubbed 'Big Brother' – with the power to control what can and cannot be discussed online by all media organisations that have an annual audience of more than 100,000 New Zealanders or a mailing list that reaches 25,000 or more subscribers.

Codes of practice for media organisations will be developed by the industry, community groups and academics – without the scrutiny of Parliament or input from the public. Once approved by the regulator, any non-compliance will be punished through fines of up to \$200,000 and orders to take-down offending content.

The proposed regulator would have the power to over-ride the new *Aotearoa New Zealand Code of Practice for Online Safety and Harms* developed by Netsafe for the big tech companies including Facebook, Google, and Twitter, and the *Harmful Digital Communications Act*, as well as a range of long established statutory and self-regulatory bodies including the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Media Council, the Advertising Standards Authority, and the work of the Chief Censor.

The new regime smacks of jack-booted totalitarianism – as freelance journalist Janet Wilson [explains](#): "In George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984, the citizens of Oceania are watched everywhere they go through telescreens by the ruling Party's omniscient leader Big Brother..."

"Like 1984 it breeds a world where paranoia and cynical distrust reign supreme. Where it's enough for someone to complain that they don't feel 'safe' which will bring that content provider under the auspices of the regulator who'll then examine the provider's safety plan. If the safety plan is found wanting, for whatever reason, if you are deemed to have offended then watch out, the weaponisation of the complaints process is complete. The regulator has the power to take down your content and fine you. Mr Orwell couldn't have designed a more labyrinthine system that robs a population of their greatest power, the ability to express themselves."

As if this is not frightening enough, the regulator would also be under the influence of Labour's racist agenda – as the consultation paper explains: "It is important that the new regulatory framework reflects New Zealand's unique cultural and social perspectives, and that it is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The new regulatory framework would aim to achieve outcomes that reflect Maori perspectives, needs, and aspirations."

They expect "a significant Maori presence on the Board of the regulator" and recommend a "formal Maori advisory structure". They also suggest Maori should be involved in creating codes of conduct that reflect cultural values and include cultural competency requirements.

A hint of where this could lead can be seen in the new social media [code](#) of practice developed by Netsafe last year: "The Code has been developed... in consultation with Maori advisors... The intention and development of the Code is encapsulated by four key Maori principles of mahi tahi (solidarity), kauhanganuitanga (balance), mana tangata (humanity) and mana (respect), which are critical and necessary to realising the purpose and aspirations of the Code..."

Since Maori will be in a position to significantly influence Labour's new media regulator, it doesn't take much imagination to conclude that commentary regarded as critical of their agenda – such as challenging their Treaty 'partnership' myth, co-governance and *He Puapua* – will be considered 'unsafe' and 'harmful' hate speech and targeted for heavy regulation.

The dominance of a Maori influence in all regulations and legislation now produced by the Labour Government can be traced back to the powerful Office for Maori Crown Relations, that was [established](#) in 2018 in collaboration with Iwi Leaders.

The Herald's senior political journalist Audrey Young provided an [insight](#) into this powerful organisation last year, pointing out that the Minister had instructed it to operate "under the radar". As a result, most people are unaware of its existence, in spite of the profound influence it is having – as the vehicle Labour's Maori caucus is using to embed co-governance throughout the State sector.

Through a framework that not only forces public service chief executives to establish cultural competency targets for all staff, the Office also [imposes](#) a Maori veto over all Government policy: "In 2019 the Cabinet Office issued a new circular for all ministers and chief executives to apply whenever new policy is being developed, to ensure it is compliant with the Treaty."

Their remit has now been expanded to cover any organisation connected to the government in any way. As a result, Treaty and cultural competency requirements are appearing throughout the private sector as well as the public sector, as New Zealand is being transformed into an Apartheid nation where a Maori world view dominates.

This can be seen only too clearly in the [proposal](#) from the New Zealand Transport Agency to introduce almost 100 bilingual traffic signs. Cultural sensitivities now appear to have become more important to the NZTA, than their primary mandate of *road safety*.

Asked why Maori is displayed as the dominant language in the signs, with English in a smaller secondary position, when most motorists only understand English, the Agency explains: "One of the design principles for bilingual traffic signs is for te reo Maori to be presented in a culturally appropriate way to reflect the mana of the language. Where te reo Maori and English text cannot be displayed as equal then te reo Maori should be more prominent. Given that te reo Maori is used less than English throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, Waka Kotahi is of the view that it needs to be promoted if it is to achieve equality with English in New Zealand."

Submissions on the bilingual traffic sign debacle close on Friday 30 June – full details can be found [HERE](#).

And the closing date for submissions on Labour's new hate speech proposal is 31 July, with details found [HERE](#).

These two government consultation processes illustrate how out of touch the Labour Government has become. Peripheral matters are now regarded as mainstream, while mainstream issues like ensuring our health system is running smoothly, that children attend school and are getting a top-quality education, and that crime is under control, have fallen into disarray.

Meanwhile the stream of Ministerial controversies just keeps growing: the sacking of Stuart Nash for disclosing confidential Cabinet information; the desertion of Meka Whaitiri to the Maori Party; the reprimand of Justice Minister Kiri Allan for attacking RadioNZ after her fiancée missed a top job; the stuff up over the Census with Statistics Minister Deborah Russell now retracting her promise to resign if she didn't reach her 90 percent response target; the hauling of Education Minister Jan Tinetti in front of the Privileges Committee for misleading Parliament; and now the unfolding saga of lies and deceit by the 'river of filth' Transport Minister Michael Wood over his on-going failure to publicly disclose and sell his Auckland Airport shares.

There is now not only a growing perception of incompetent Ministers ignoring the rules, but also of leadership failure at the highest level, with the Cabinet Office [telling](#) the Minister *12 times* over a two year period to comply, instead of enforcing their requirement.

All of this paints a dismal picture of a woeful Government completely out of its depth and doing untold damage to our country – as this week's NZCPR Guest Commentator, Frank Newman encapsulates in his narrative "If I wanted New Zealand to fail":

If I wanted New Zealand to fail...
To suffer, not prosper; to despair, not dream.
I would start with democracy itself.
I would say it is not working.
I'd say that a House of Representatives that represents all people, does not suit a modern society.
I'd call it old-fashioned.
I'd say everyone is equal, but some are more equal than others...

If I wanted New Zealand to fail...
I would make bold promises, then hire an army of spin doctors to make excuses when things go wrong.
I would make the independent media financially dependent on the government so that instead of holding the politicians to account, the Government's narrative becomes their narrative...

If I wanted New Zealand to fail...
I would prey on the goodness and decency of ordinary New Zealanders.
I would only need to convince them... that all of this is for the greater good... that politicians are the answer to their problems, not the cause...

If I wanted New Zealand to fail...
I wouldn't change a thing.

The full narrative may be read [HERE](#).

Finally, we are pleased to announce that our ambitious project to print and deliver free copies of Sir Apirana Ngata's explanation of the Treaty of Waitangi to New Zealand households is now underway.

A trained lawyer and Member of Parliament for 39 years, Sir Apirana Ngata is one of New Zealand's most respected Maori leaders – and the face of our \$50 bank note.

His clear and concise explanation of the Treaty was written in the Maori language in 1922 in response to questions about its meaning.

Forty-one years later, with questions still remaining, Sir Apirana's explanation was translated into English and distributed free of charge to Maori households as an insert in a government magazine.

Another forty years on, with the debate continuing and the Treaty being reinterpreted, we are distributing Sir Apirana's explanation to Kiwi households to set the record straight about the Treaty's original meaning.

Our project is in two parts.

The first is printing Sir Apirana's explanation in a format that allows for mass distribution to an estimated 1.4 million households – namely as a quality insert in the country's newspaper network.

And the second part involves printing 10,000 copies of the explanation as an A5 booklet to send to libraries and selected schools.

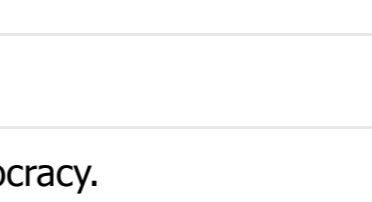
At this stage, thanks to the generosity of NZCPR readers, we have raised sufficient funding to print the 10,000 booklets and 500,000 of the inserts. Accordingly, we are now launching an urgent fundraiser to cover the cost of printing and distributing the balance of the inserts.

If you would like to support this project to set the record straight on the original meaning of the Treaty, then please visit our fundraising page [HERE](#). Complimentary copies of the A5 booklet will be available to those who donate to this project. And, if you know anyone else who might be interested in helping, please encourage them to visit our fundraising page as well.

Please note: To register for our free weekly newsletter please click [HERE](#).

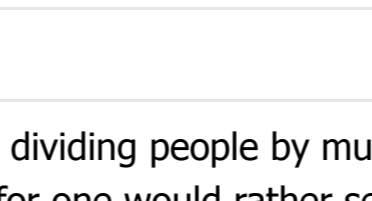
THIS WEEK'S POLL ASKS:

***Do you support Labour's plan to introduce a new hate speech regulator?**



***Poll comments are posted below.**

***All NZCPR poll results can be seen in the Archive.**



THIS WEEK'S POLL COMMENTS

Freedom of speech is a right and shouldn't be regulated by law.	Anthony
Free and open speech allows the issues to be aired. We may not like what another is saying, but if we can all express how we feel or see the world then we can begin a conversation to try and understand each other.	Rockit
Just an attack on Free Speech	Mike
Freedom of expression is article (14) in the N.Z. Bill of Rights Act 1990. Which I suggest people should remind them selves & read it & you will see how you all got screwed over with the Covid 19 vaxx's & lock downs.	Allen
Nothing that includes honouring a false interpretation of the Treaty makes sense in a modern nation	Mark
They only want speech that favours Labour.	Graham
Why would they?Everything they have promised, they have stuffed up,why would this be any different? The current anti Ukraine stories reported on TV are someone's opinion, even if I don't agree with them,I agree with their right to express it.	Peter
without freedom of speech democracy dies	john
it's not protecting us it's censoring us.	Graeme
Every one is entitled to an opinion.	Ann
Good God.NO	David
1984's new version.	Bryan
Way too far reaching. Another crack in our democracy.	Heather
I definitely do not support Labours plan to introduce hate speech legislation.	John
Wake up everybody!	Wietske
Good grief NO!! They have made so many attacks on our freedoms and their racial policies are SO bad that most of us are just waiting for October 14th.	Roger
Hell no!	Bryan
Of course not. Further madness from the lefties, dividing people by muzzling them. It is extremely difficult to determine what hate speech is and I for one would rather see/hear any enemies than have them hidden.	Scott
Labour and the associated scum ie Maori and left wing women journalists who actually hate the white population , will just further criticize white only supposed comments . The fact that the race relations wanker Mr BUFFOON shows anything including killing of whites is deemed not hateful , Shows what a culture of anti european mentality prevails . Labour and likeminded bottom feeders must have their bubble burst this election ,otherwise I believe a revolt amongst the idiots currently in power will surely happen . Vote wisely Kiwis .	Ray
It has proved impossible to legally define "hate speech" in any way that threatening speech is not already covered by current laws. Some "definitions" of "hate speech" include anything that "causes offence", which is purely subjective. I found Ardern's speeches offensive. Does that mean they are "hate speech" ?	doug
God Save the PUBLIC	Peter
What's happening to the "freedom of speech" which is enshrined in our Bill of Rights? Or is that being ridden roughshod over by this "woke" government, aided and abetted – and perhaps controlled by – the Maori caucus?	Laurence
Now on earth should any human being not have the right to express an opinion, even if that opinion might be offensive to some people? Why is one man, or woman, to hold such authority over a whole nation as to what they can and cannot freely say without fear of arrest, incarceration/fines and the fear of jeopardising their job or career? When George Orewil wrote 1984 back in 1949, it was viewed as a dystopian hellish nightmare. Now more than 70 years on, we are seeing it actually becoming a reality.	Kevin
Kiwi's need to stand up and be counted, and the only way to do that is to get these publications out to every New Zealander, so they can see them in BLACK and WHITE!	William
It will become a crime to have an opinion.	Brian
It would only be used to stifle criticism of the Govt or outlandish Maori demands.	Peter
Free Speech should never be compromised. It is our born given right	Martin
The Ministry of Truth (had) three slogans: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH. 1984 in 2023 Control the media, you control the mind.	Peter
Totalitarianism dressed up as hate speech laws. Frightening	Richard
Regulating the NO DISCUSSION put upon us by this 'government' of incredible destruction of New Zealand	Peter
Racism under another name	Grant
We need free speech	Dave
Yet another mass control tactic being exhibited by the most communistic government in the free world and driven with additional racist bigotry.	Mike
I don't support Labour (communist) fully stop. If 'we the people' don't unite and push back, we will all be confined to gulags (15 min cities) in the blink of an eye.	neil
We've already introduced the internationally-dispised apartheid system. Why make it worse?	john
It is the end to our Human right to free speech. We already have laws to limit the extremes (inciting violence) and these should be used. We do NOT need know draconian censorship laws	Ken
But Labour's propaganda has seeped into all vestiges of national and local government anyway – getting it out is going to be a major challenge, if ever.	John
Certainly Not!!	Robyn
Just another Liebour/Maori/Green parties' tactic to stop the truth being known.	Wayne
Free Speech is the spine of democracy	Sharon
This is frightening neoMarxist Orwellian legislation that has no part in a democratic society - it is totally outrageous	Hylton
Control control their mantra.	phil
This cannot be allowed to go through. The objective is for totalitarian control to suit the political outcomes of those minorities who want an absolute free run at cementing their causes in place over and above the common sense of the majority. It's typical of socialists who want to have central control through giant bureaucracies that in the end are more concerned with their income comforts at the expense of delivering proper services to us citizens from whom these drone like beings derive their inflated incomes.	Garry.
Freedom of speech is the most basic HUMAN RIGHT. Just who do these clowns think they are?	John
ROD	
Talk about a distraction from things that need attention like government money wasting	Keren
More authoritarian garbage from inexperienced, racist, ministers	John
NO, NO. A THOUSAND TIMES NO. When freedom of speech goes, society is lost forever.	Marion
I WANT TO CRITISE POLITICS AND PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE WRONG	ste
"NO" (really loudly)	Coral
Labour needs to get out of our lives	Stephen
Unnecessary and has become divisive within New Zealand. All road signs can be read or understood by 99.9% of the NZ population. Additional waste of money as well.	Bill
This is certainly Orwellian, a totalitarian, apartheid government intention total control and decimation of NZ's Health, education and economy. Shame on them. I look upon it as treason, starting with Adern.	Andrew
How could anyone support anything this band of incompetent lunstics dream up. Worst government ever been in NZ.	Peter
Hateful regulator.	Mark
this is another ploy to control the narrative of NZ and to bring New Zealanders under state direction with the labour politicians in particular thinking they have all the answers This hate speech regulator shows how controlling this particular government is and the massive disruption it will cause to our way of life, is not an option	jenny
Aprtheid to support elite Maoris is not wanted in NZ	Arthur
This is an unacceptable and unwanted intrusion against freedom of speech and expression.	Peter
With our current crop of unhinged, far-Left nutters steering NZ towards disaster, it would be tantamount to giving a fox unrestrained access to "guard" the henhouse.	Derek
It is more than hate speech – it can include offensive speech or any speech the regulator wants to control	David
I'm absolutely opposed. This plan must be stopped in its tracks if we are to remain a democracy.	Trevor
Definitely No. Free speech is the bastion of democracy. The problem nowadays is not the speech, but the intolerance of a noisy few.	David
Criminal insanity!	Grant
No, no, no! There should be less regulation, not more!	Danny
Absolutely not. NZ is already highly regulated. We do need any more regulation.	Murray
Protecting our right to free speech is why we need to defeat Labour at the election. And the Greens. And the Maori Party.	Barbara
We need a big brother regulator like a hole in the head! And as far as those bilingual traffic signs are concerned – what moron decided on those???	Simon
Great article Frank – and great Treaty project Muriel.	Jason