

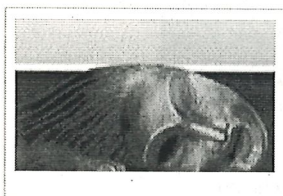
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Today in History

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Nation Dates
FINAL



1975 Waitangi Tribunal created

The government created the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975 to hear Maori claims of breach Treaty of Waitangi by successive New Zealand governments. The Tribunal has been in constant evolution ever since, trying to meet the changing and conflicting demands of claimants, the government, and the public.

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed by British officials and Maori leaders in 1840, became a rod for the frustration and anger of generations of Maori who felt disinherited by the colonisation. The Tribunal was created to report on contemporary Maori claims to the government, to suggest settlements, and to ensure that future legislation was consistent with the Treaty. Most of the Tribunal's early inquiries addressed environmental and planning issues at a local level, though claims were relatively rare in its first decade.

In 1985 the government extended the Tribunal's jurisdiction to claims about all breaches of the Treaty since 1840, resulting in a huge increase in the number of claims and an expansion of the Tribunal's activities. The Tribunal concluded that governments had breached the Treaty on countless occasions since 1840, and that Pakeha New Zealand was built on a long history of broken promises and bad deals. These conclusions were highly controversial, and a public backlash followed. The future direction of the Tribunal, and the weight that should be placed on its findings, were frequent subjects for debate in the election campaigns of the 1990s and 2000s.

Claims continued to roll in through the 1990s, forcing the Tribunal to reassess its working methods. It decided to group claims into districts and to hear districts in succession. Dogged by limited resources and the sheer volume of work, the Tribunal was frequently criticised for the length of time it took to produce its reports. As reports got longer and longer, years could pass before they appeared.

In 1999 the government offered claimants the option of commencing settlement negotiations without having their claims reported on by the Tribunal. The popularity of this option grew, especially after the Tribunal's slowness became a major issue at the 2005 election. The Tribunal once again faced the challenge of staying relevant and useful, as claimants bypassed it completely or reached a settlement before its reports were complete. The government then introduced a deadline for lodging historical claims of 1 September 2008.

Despite the obstacles and controversies surrounding its work, the Tribunal has produced a body of judicial findings which have made a major contribution to remedying some of the more unsettling aspects of New Zealand's colonial legacy. By its 30th anniversary in October 2005, the Tribunal had released 96 reports ranging from brief judicial findings to multi-volume reports. The subjects covered everything from very specific local problems to the impact of a wide variety of government policies over huge geographical areas.

Image: Waitangi Tribunal website icon (detail)

Internal links

Treaty events since 1950 - Treaty timeline Waitangi Day 1970s The Treaty in brief The Treaty debated - the Treaty in practice Political and constitutional timeline

MCH n.d.

External links

[Waitangi Tribunal \(Waitangi Tribunal\)](#) [Matiu Rata's enduring legacy \(Beehive\)](#) [Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 \(Statutes of NZ\)](#) [The origins of nationhood \(Te Ara\)](#) [The Ngai Tahu settlement \(Te Ara\)](#)

This Week in History

15 August 1951
Troop ship
Wahine
wrecked en
route to
Korean War



16 August 1944
CORSO
formed



17 August 1839
NZ Company
ship Tory
arrives



18 August 1955
20-year old
hanged for
murder



19 August 1944
Kiwi pilot's
sacrifice saves
French village



20 August 1940
Turakina sunk
by German
raider in
Tasman



21 August 1958
Auckland
pedestrians
begin 'Barnes
Dance'