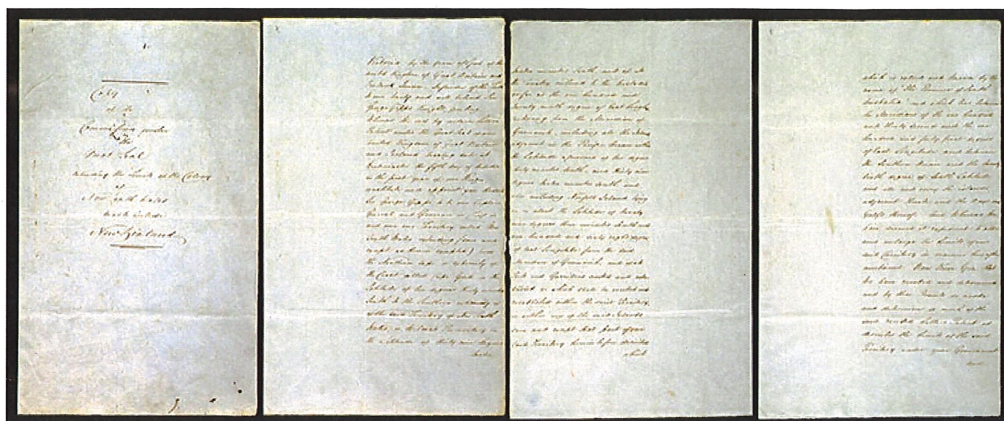


1839 Letters Patent Establishing New Zealand as Part of New South Wales



The 1839 Letters Patent, also known as the "Copy of the Commission under the Great Seal extending the limits of the Colony of New South Wales so as to include New Zealand". Archives reference: IA9 Box 1/2. Click on the image to enlarge or download.

In pre-Treaty times New South Wales and New Zealand had a close relationship. Māori were frequent visitors to Sydney, and when the boundaries of New South Wales were first established in 1788, the original area included half of Australia, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, New Zealand's North Island, and about half of the South Island. In 1814 and 1819 the Governor of New South Wales appointed Magistrates and Justices of the Peace in New Zealand, and from 1833 the British Resident in New Zealand, James Busby, also answered to the Governor.

As interest in New Zealand as a colonial settlement grew, more formal arrangements were made to establish British intervention. On 12 December 1838, Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, requested the British Foreign Office to consider appointing a British Consul to New Zealand. This position was accepted by Captain William Hobson in February 1839.

On 15 June 1839, Letters Patent were issued that amended the Commission of the New South Wales Governor. These extended the boundaries of New South Wales to include "any territory which is or may be acquired in sovereignty by Her Majesty...within that group of islands in the Pacific Ocean, commonly called New Zealand". Hobson was appointed Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand on 30 July 1839.

The original Letters Patent is not held by Archives New Zealand. It is thought that on arrival in Sydney, a copy of the Letters Patent was made for Hobson. It is this copy, partly displayed above, that we hold.

A year later, on 16 June 1840, the New South Wales Legislative Council passed an Act declaring that the laws of New South Wales now applied in New Zealand. Then on 7 August 1840, the British Parliament passed an Act enabling New Zealand to be severed from New South Wales. The Charter of 1840 followed in November, making New Zealand a British Colony separate from New South Wales.

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