

# First wāhine Māori MPs honoured in Parliament

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Portraits of the first two Māori women members of Parliament were recently unveiled in the former Māori Affairs Committee room, Matangireia.

Portraits of Iriaka Rātana, the first Māori woman to enter Parliament, and Hon Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan, the first female Māori Cabinet Minister, have been unveiled in Matangireia to join other prominent Māori politicians.

"These women were trailblazers of their time. They led the way on issues that remain a priority today such as te reo Māori, education, employment and electoral representation," said Minister Te Ururoa Flavell at the unveiling.

## Iriaka Rātana

The late Iriaka Rātana was the first Māori woman to enter Parliament in 1949, and represented the Western Māori electorate for 20 years.

She was an advocate for the Treaty of Waitangi and in her time she drew Parliament's attention to land issues, housing concerns and poor living standards at Rātana Pā.

## Hon Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan

The late Whetū Tirikātene-Sullivan began her career in Parliament in 1967, holding the Southern Māori seat until 1996.

She was the first female Māori Cabinet Minister, and she was instrumental in the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal. She also advocated for Māori news on television and radio, and was a pioneer of health promotion for tāngata whenua.



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*Source: Office of the Clerk*