



Te Kāhui Tika Tangata
Human Rights Commission



How the Human Rights Act supports people

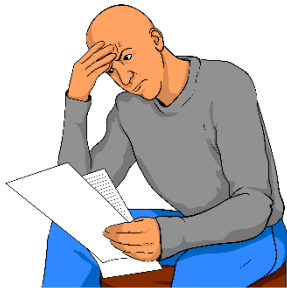


Published: January 2025

Before you start



This is a long document.



It can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.



What you will find in here

Page number:



What this booklet is about.....3

How the Human Rights Act
protects people5

Human Rights Act grounds.....10

How to contact the Commission ...22

How the Commission has solved
problems for people34

Other agencies that can assist43

What this booklet is about



This Easy Read information is from

Te Kāhui Tika Tangata

Human Rights Commission.

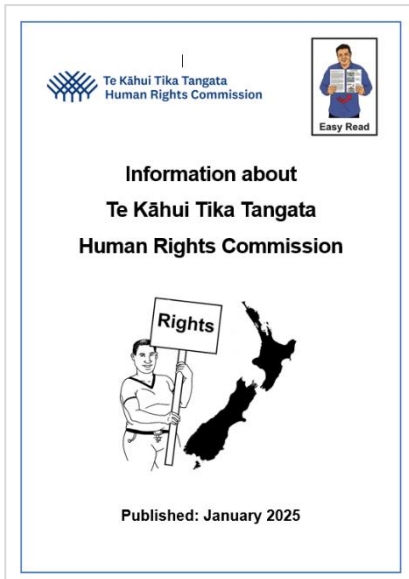


Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission was set up in 1977.

In this booklet we will call it **the Commission.**



The Commission works under the law called the **Human Rights Act 1993.**



You can learn more about the Commission in the Easy Read booklet:

Information about Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission

You can find this Easy Read booklet at:



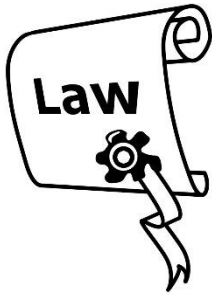
<https://bit.ly/4jAWPf0>



This information is not the same as:

- reading the law
- getting advice from someone who works with the law / a lawyer.

How the Human Rights Act protects people



The Human Rights Act is a law that says what **human rights** everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand has.



Human rights are things that everyone should:

- have
- be able to do.



Some human rights are:

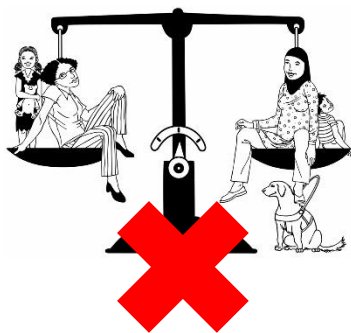
- somewhere to live
- being kept safe
- getting the medical care you need
- being treated fairly at work.





The Human Rights Act says that things should be fair for everyone.

The Human Rights Act can protect you from:



- **discrimination** is when you are treated:

- differently to other people
- unfairly

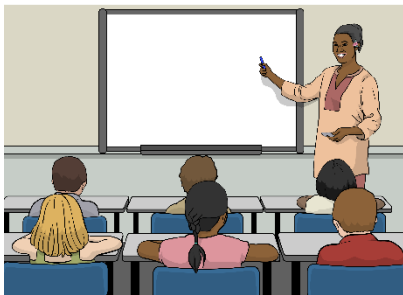


- **harassment** which means people making you feel unsafe.



The Human Rights Act protects people in lots of different parts of their lives like:

- in their work / job
- when they apply for a job
- in education like:
 - school
 - college.

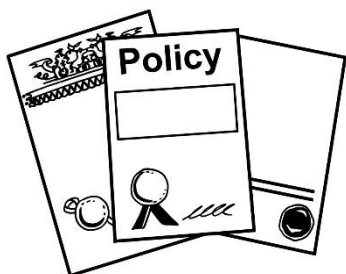




The Human Rights Act also protects people in parts of their lives like:

- training for work like learning to be a builder
- using public transport including:
 - buses
 - trains
 - ferries
- using public places like the library
- housing / having a place to live
- accommodation / places to stay like hotels
- going shopping
- using services like a hairdresser.





The Human Rights Act also protects people in parts of their lives like:

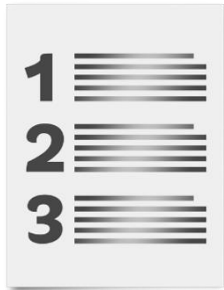
- dealing with government departments like Work and Income
- using public services like rubbish collection
- things that laws say
- the way Government says it will do things in its policies.



You can contact the Human Rights Commission if you want to:

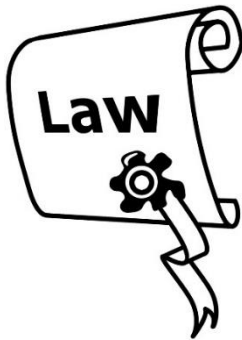
- know more about what the Commission does
- ask if you are protected in other areas of your life.

Human Rights Act grounds



Sometimes there are **grounds** why people are not treated fairly.

In this case **grounds** are the reasons why something happens.



The Human Rights Act can protect people who are not treated fairly for lots of different grounds.



These grounds for people not being treated fairly can be things that:

- are happening now
- happened in the past
- people thought were true even if they did not happen.





For example it is against the law to discriminate / treat someone unfairly because:

- they have a mental illness
- they used to have a mental illness
- you think they have a mental illness.



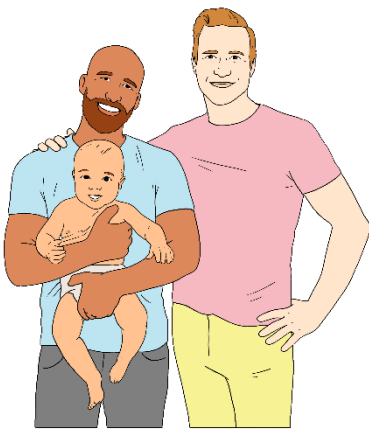
On **pages 12 to 21** you can find a list all the grounds / reasons that the Human Rights Act can act on to protect people.

1. Sex



The ground / reason of sex means things like:

- being pregnant
- having a baby
- **gender identity**
- **sex characteristics.**



Gender identity is if you say you are:

- a man
- a woman
- another gender like non-binary.



Sex characteristics are things that might make other people guess you are:

- a man
- a woman.

This could be something like having:

- breasts
- a beard.



2. Marital status

Marital status means if you are married.



Marital status can include people who are:

- single
- married
- in a civil union which is a legal relationship a bit like marriage
- in a defacto relationship which means living with someone you are not married to
- separated / no longer living with your partner.





Marital status can also mean people who are:

- divorced
- widowed which means your partner has died.



3. Religious belief

Religious belief includes:



- people who are members of a religion like:

- Christians
- Muslims
- Jews



- having a particular religious belief like believing that women should cover their hair.



4. Ethical belief

Ethical belief means people who do not have religious beliefs.



5. Race

Race can mean things like:

- the colour of your skin
- which country you come from.





6. Disability

Disability includes people who:

- have mobility impairments
- have sensory impairments like people who are:
 - Deaf / hard of hearing
 - blind / have low vision
- have a learning disability
- have other kinds of impairments
- have an illness that will last for a long time
- use a disability assist dog.



Deaf



7. Age



People who are older than 16 years can use the Human Rights Act if they feel they have been treated unfairly because of how old they are.

8. Political opinion



Political opinion means if you:

- have a political opinion / idea
- support a particular political party
- do not agree with a political opinion / idea.

9. Employment status



Employment status means if you:

- work full time or part time hours
- are unemployed which means you do not have a job
- get a benefit from Work and Income
- get money from ACC because of an accident / health issue.





10. Family status

Family status means:

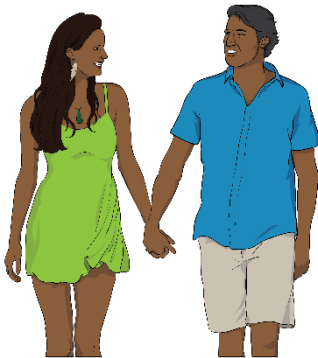
- who you are related to like your:
 - parents
 - partner
 - children
- if you look after:
 - children
 - other people.



11. Sexual orientation

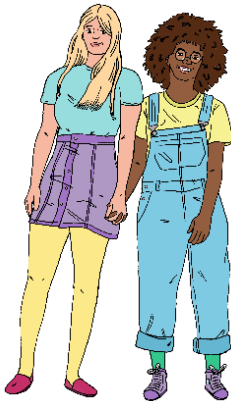


Sexual orientation means who you are attracted to / have a relationship with.



Sexual orientation includes people who are:

- straight which means they are attracted to people of a different gender
- gay
- lesbian
- bisexual.



How to contact the Commission



Step 1: Contact us

You can contact us to ask if we can assist you.

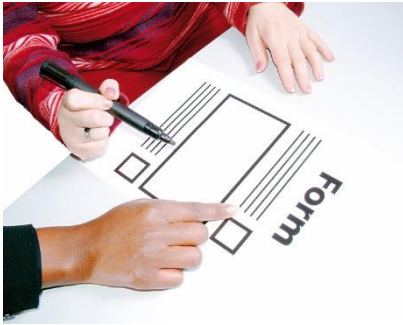


When you call us leave a message so we can call you back as soon as we can.



On our **website** you will find information about human rights:

www.tikatangata.org.nz



You can fill out a form on our website if you want to:

- ask a question
- make a **complaint** about something that has happened to you.



A **complaint** is when you:

- are not happy about something
- want to tell someone why you are not happy.



We can support you to make a complaint.



You can contact us by:

- **email:** **info@hrc.co.nz**
- **phone:** **0800 496 877**
- **text:** **021 0236 4253**



When you phone please leave a message so we can call you back as soon as we can.



If you need to speak to us in a language that is not English please let us know.



We can use **interpreters** to support us to talk to people who do not speak English.



An **interpreter** is someone who supports people who do not speak the same language to understand each other.



We have interpreters for 180 different spoken languages.



If you find it hard to use the phone the **New Zealand Relay** service is for people who are:

- Deaf / hard of hearing
- deafblind
- speech impaired / find it hard to talk.



You can find out more about the New Zealand Relay service on the **website**:

www.nzrelay.co.nz



Step 2: Information and support

We will get in touch with you to:

- give you information
- talk about what choices you have for your:
 - question
 - complaint.



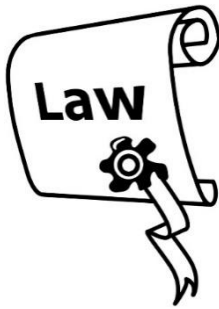
We can also give you information to deal with the complaint yourself.



We can also give you information about other organisations that can support you.



Some of the other organisations that can support you are listed on **pages 43 to 47** of this booklet.



We can work out if your complaint comes under the Human Rights Act.



We have a service to try to deal with your complaint if it does come under the Human Rights Act.

Step 3: Dispute resolution



Dispute resolution means how we work with people to deal with / solve complaints.

To deal with complaints we try to get both sides to talk to each other.



Talking to each other is a way to understand what the other person:

- thinks
- feels.

We can talk to people:

- on their own
- together.





We can talk to people:

- online using a video call service like Zoom
- in person.



What we do is:

- free which means it will not cost you any money
- confidential which means we do not tell anyone else what happens when we meet
- fair to both sides.





Step 4: Resolution

Resolution is what happens when we have finished with your complaint.



Most complaints can be sorted out through Step 3: Dispute resolution.



Everyone has to agree with what will happen to deal with the problem which can include:

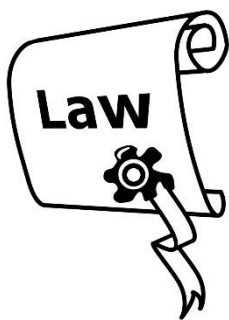


- saying sorry
- agreeing not to do the same thing in the future



- doing some training
- paying compensation / money to the person who was treated unfairly.





Step 5: Legal options

Sometimes your complaint is not resolved through our process.



If that happens then we close your complaint.



When we close your complaint it means there is nothing more we can do to solve it.



You can choose to take your complaint to the **Human Rights Review Tribunal**.



The **Human Rights Review Tribunal** is a special kind of court that deals with complaints about breaches of the Human Rights Act.

The Human Rights Review Tribunal can make:



- findings which means it can decide if your rights have been taken away
- orders which means it can tell whoever took your rights away what they must do.



If you want to take your complaint to the Human Rights Review Tribunal you can ask the **Office of Human Rights Proceedings** if they will give you a free lawyer to support you.

The **Office of Human Rights Proceedings** is a separate part of the Human Rights Commission.

The Office of Human Rights
Proceedings can support people to
take cases to the Human Rights
Review Tribunal.



It is important to know that the
Human Rights Commission does **not**:

- investigate / look into complaints
- decide if the law has been broken.

How the Commission has solved problems for people



Here are some examples of how the Commission has supported people with human rights complaints.



We have changed the names of the people in these cases so that no one can tell who they are.

1. Promoting respect for taonga

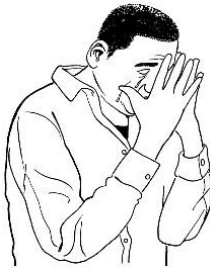


Matiu complained that he did not get a job because of his tāmoko / cultural tattoo.



We contacted the employer who agreed to meet with Matiu.

Matiu told the employer how he felt.



The employer:



- said sorry to Matiu
- agreed to pay him compensation money
- said they would change the way they work to make sure they include people with cultural tattoos.



2. Stopping sexual harassment



Kylie complained that people at work were making sexual jokes to her.



The supervisor seemed to be the leader of this behaviour.

This made Kylie feel like she could not complain at work.



The sexual harassment upset Kylie so much that she:

- left the job
- made a sexual harassment complaint to the Commission.





The Commission arranged:

- a dispute resolution meeting
- a safe space for Kylie to talk to her employer.



The company agreed to:

- give staff training on sexual harassment when they start work
- pay Kylie compensation money to say sorry for hurting her.



3. Speaking up against racism



Anika was on public transport.



She heard the driver make racist comments about other passengers.

The comments were not about her.



Anika was:

- upset
- worried about how it might make other people feel.



She made a complaint to the Commission about harmful speech.



The Commission supported Anika to talk to the transport company.

The driver said sorry to Anika for the comments.



The company agreed to make sure all staff follow their policy against discrimination.

4. Disabled people at work



Terry was a volunteer at an NGO / non-government organisation.



The organisation decided that all staff had to do a new training course.

The managers thought Terry could not do the course because he has **dyslexia**.



Dyslexia is a condition that can make it hard to:

- read
- write.



The NGO told Terry he could not work there as a volunteer any more.

Terry made a disability discrimination complaint to the Commission.



When the Commission contacted the NGO about the complaint they realised they had made a mistake.



The organisation contacted Terry to:

- say sorry to him
- tell him how important he is to the team.



Terry was able to do the course with a few changes so he could stay as a volunteer.

5. Living in peace together



Jay complained her neighbour was harassing her because of her sexual orientation.



The Commission contacted the neighbour to:

- talk about the complaint
- find out what they thought
- tell them how Jay was feeling.



The neighbour:

- said sorry
- agreed to change how they behaved.



Other agencies that can assist



There are other organisations that can support people with questions / complaints.



1. Office of the Ombudsman



The office of the Ombudsman Investigates complaints about government agencies.

You can find more information on their **website**:



www.ombudsman.parliament.nz



2. Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment - Employment Mediation Service

The Ministry of Business
Innovation and Employment is
also sometimes called **MBIE**.



You can talk MBIE for information
about mediation services for
employment issues.



You can find more information on
their **website**:

www.employment.govt.nz



Health and Disability Commissioner
Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga

3. Health and Disability Commissioner

The Health and Disability
Commissioner is also sometimes
called **HDC**.



HDC Investigates / looks into
complaints about health and
disability services.



You can find more information on
their **website**:

www.hdc.org.nz

4. Privacy Commissioner



The Privacy Commissioner investigates / looks into complaints about possible **breaches of privacy**.

Breaches of privacy means your information has been shared with people without your **permission**.

Permission means saying yes to something being shared.



You can find more information on their **website**:

www.privacy.org.nz

5. Lifeline Aotearoa

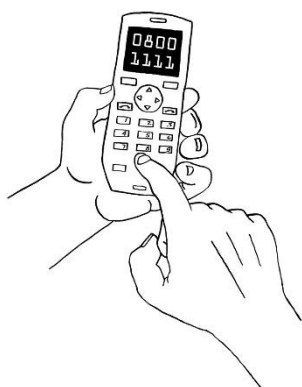


Lifeline Aotearoa is a free service for mental health support.



You can get in touch with them:

- at any time of day or night
- on any day of the week.



You can:

- **phone: 0800 543 354**
- **text: 4357**



You can find more information on their **website**:

www.lifeline.org.nz

Make it Easy
Kia Māmā Mai



People First NZ
Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi



PHOTO SYMBOLS®



This information has been written by Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission

It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

Make it Easy uses images from:

- Changepeople.org
- Photosymbols.com
- SGC Image Works
- Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho
- T. Wood.

All images used in this Easy Read document are subject to copyright rules and cannot be used without permission.