



Key concepts

# ΤΕ ΤΑΡΕΚΕ FAIR FUTURES IN ΑΟΤΕΑΡΟΑ

ROYAL  
SOCIETY  
TE APĀRANGI

## KUPUTAKA GLOSSARY

<b>hapū</b>	tribe, or sub-tribe
<b>hapori whānui</b>	wider community
<b>hauora</b>	well-being
<b>He Whakaputanga</b>	Declaration of Independence
<b>iwi</b>	extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people
<b>koru</b>	fold, loop, coil, curled shoot, spiral motif
<b>katoa</b>	all, every, totally
<b>mahi</b>	work
<b>mahi tahi</b>	working together, collaboration
<b>mana</b>	integrity, prestige
<b>marae</b>	courtyard, the open area in front of the wharenuī, often including buildings around the marae
<b>ngā mihi maioha</b>	thank you with appreciation
<b>mūmū</b>	a chequerboard tukutuku pattern
<b>purupuru whetū</b>	a tukutuku pattern
<b>tamariki</b>	children
<b>te tapeke</b>	the inclusion, or leaving no-one out (from 'ka tapeke katoa te iwi' including all of the people)
<b>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi
<b>tino rangatiratanga</b>	political independence
<b>tukutuku</b>	ornamental lattice-work used in the walls of meeting houses
<b>whakapā mai</b>	connect with us
<b>whānau</b>	family
<b>wharenuī</b>	meeting house, main building of a marae
<b>whāriki</b>	pathway, platform
<b>Whiringa-ā-nuku</b>	October

## TE TAPEKE

The inclusion, leaving no-one out.

## KORU

Two jointed koru spirals: one depicts new beginnings, life and hope; the other a point of balance, a state of harmony in life.



## TUKUTUKU

Two contemporary tukutuku designs: one is Mūmū and the other Purupuru Whetū.



### Mūmū

represents  
alliance, your move,  
my move.



### Purupuru Whetū

the stars and  
the great people  
of our nation.

Royal Society Te Apārangi has convened a diverse, multidisciplinary panel\* to examine issues of fairness, equality, and equity in Aotearoa New Zealand. The spirit with which the panel is approaching its work on fairness in Aotearoa is Te Tapeke, from ‘ka tapeke katoa te iwi’.<sup>†</sup> This concept of inclusion conveys the importance of valuing and including all people equally. The panel’s task is to identify and highlight some of the important choices New Zealanders face in determining how to shape te tapeke fair futures in our country.



\* [royalsociety.org.nz/fair-futures](https://royalsociety.org.nz/fair-futures) † Joshua 4:11–13. ‘Including all people, without exception’.

The panel's vision is an Aotearoa in which people are enabled to realise their unique capabilities and live lives they value. This includes a society that upholds the dignity, mana, and equal rights of all people to fully participate in, and contribute meaningfully to, their communities and nation.

In this introductory paper, the panel identifies the main concepts and principles underpinning the notion of fairness, and outlines the panel's further work. This paper is not a comprehensive literature or policy review. Rather, it seeks to prompt New Zealanders to think about what fairness means for them; about what might be needed to secure a fair future for following generations; and about how to balance and manage various competing responsibilities in regard to society and the natural environment, so as to ensure a fair and sustainable future for all. These ideas will be explored in the further work of the panel, aimed at helping New Zealanders to consider the nature of, and requirements for, a fair or just society.

The panel began its mahi work by recognising some of the actions Aotearoa needs to take in order to tackle important issues challenging our society. For example:

- Making decisions that better reflect the diverse voices of Aotearoa – now and in the future
- Ensuring that all citizens have the capacity to live fulfilling lives, while recognising our unique and important differences
- Acknowledging and addressing past injustices through restorative justice, in ways that ensure we thrive today and that future generations may also thrive (1–3).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many uncertainties and challenges, bringing an even sharper focus to issues of fairness in Aotearoa. No one can be sure how the pandemic will affect our communities, work, education, healthcare systems, and the everyday ways in which our society operates (4,5). What we do know, however, is that some New Zealanders are faring far worse than others. The way we in Aotearoa approach these critical issues will reflect our values and inform how we live together. The concept of fairness provides a starting point for considering potential approaches to achieving a just society.

## WHAT IS FAIRNESS?

A sense of fairness becomes apparent in early childhood (6), and is an influential concept across different societies and cultures (7). New Zealanders have a strong sense of what is ‘fair’ or ‘unfair’ (8), and people judge individual and collective actions today and in the past in terms of what they believe about fairness. However, ideas about fairness often differ markedly within the diverse communities of Aotearoa and internationally.

How people think about fairness, including what constitutes a fair process and a fair outcome, often reflects their social-economic circumstances, cultural background, and philosophical approach (9). Put another way, people’s perspectives on fairness differ because of their particular circumstances and the different weight they place on the various principles of fairness (see below). These differences need to be acknowledged, discussed, and taken seriously, and there is a need to seek agreement wherever possible on what fairness requires if a society is to function well.

The panel recognises that the concept of fairness is reflected in the principles underpinning the Treaty of Waitangi, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, 1840 (10); He Whakaputanga Declaration of Independence, 1835 (11); and the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples (12). Te Tiriti,

for example, guarantees to Māori their right to their lands and natural resources in Article 2, and equal status as British subjects in Article 3. However, Article 2 goes further – guaranteeing to Māori hapū their right to tino rangatiratanga, political independence. The United Nations declaration endorses that individual indigenous peoples have equal rights to all other peoples, as well as their right as a collective to self-determination.

### Historical approaches to fairness

The nature of fairness, including related ideas of equality, equity, and justice, has been extensively debated and discussed since ancient times (13–21).

There are some well-established principles of fairness and criteria for determining the moral relevance of particular differences between people (18,22). However, some aspects remain

controversial. For example, modern theories of social justice differ in the principles they embrace (15–17,21,23–26); the weight they attach to particular principles (27); and the range of social institutions\* and individuals to whom they apply (8,9,10,11,12,14).

One of the most influential philosophers on fairness was John Rawls (1921–2002). Fairness lies at the heart of Rawls’ conception of justice (15). For a society to be just or fair, Rawls argued that two principles must be satisfied. Firstly, all citizens, if they are to be genuinely free and equal, must enjoy the same full range of basic rights and liberties. Secondly, social and economic inequalities are only justified if two conditions are met: all citizens must have a fair opportunity to participate in all aspects of their society; and any such inequalities must yield the greatest

benefit to the least-advantaged citizens (15). Rawls’ theory of justice, however, is limited in who it includes. For example, it does not recognise the particular needs of people with severe physical or mental disabilities.

Issues of inclusion remain today, although there has been a gradual extension of the scope of fairness over time. For much of human history, many people – including slaves, women, children, and those with disabilities – were excluded from the primary domain of fairness. However, the past few centuries have witnessed the universalisation of long-standing principles that were previously only applied to some people.

In New Zealand, too, ideas about fairness have changed. For example, traditionally, rural daughters were expected to marry and

## Our views about fairness often reflect our own circumstances



\* Social institutions are structures in society such as family, the economy, religion, education, healthcare, law, and government.

raise children (28), while sons could expect to inherit the family farm (29). Today, these ideas about gender are almost universally considered outdated and unfair.

Recent approaches to fairness acknowledge the value of human diversity, and provide a different way of thinking about fairness – for example, the capability approach, proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (21,23,30–36). This theory asserts that people should be able to live well, thrive, and flourish in the fullest sense. It also recognises that wellbeing is multidimensional. The capability approach endorses a way of considering fairness that is reflective of, and relevant to, New Zealanders as a whole, and the different communities that constitute Aotearoa.

## Fair futures

In the panel's view, there is currently a growing concern in New Zealand about how to ensure fairness in the future. Many New Zealanders believe that the actions of today's generations should not disadvantage the life opportunities of future ones. For these and other reasons, the panel believes fairness has an important role to play in shaping and developing New Zealand's laws and policies. This idea is exemplified by a 1989 speech by Lord Cooke, an eminent

New Zealand jurist, that highlights fairness as an important lens through which to view and resolve complex issues of law and justice (37).

Fairness requires recognising the needs and aspirations of groups as well as individuals. For instance, the Māori concept of whānau focuses on the wellbeing of the collective and involves responsibilities to marae and hapū. Likewise, in many Pacific cultures, family and extended family form the basis of how a society is organised – prescribing roles and guiding collective obligations and commitments.

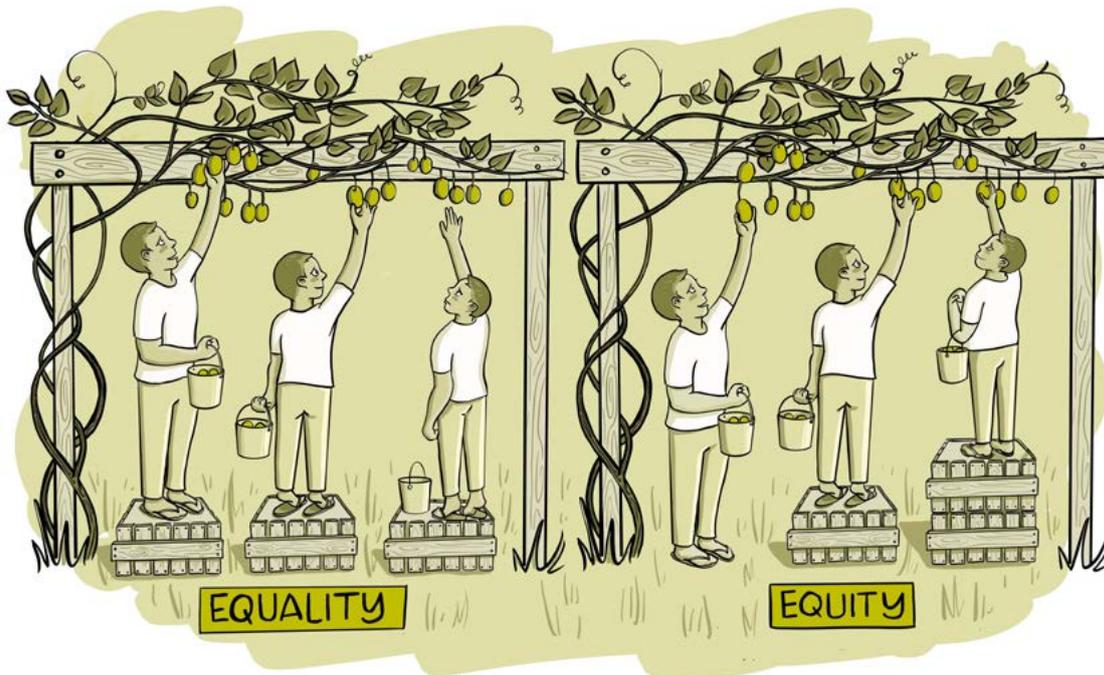
Different understandings of fairness can lead to misunderstandings and tensions, such as conflicting expectations of each other and the function of government as an adjudicator of fairness. Frank conversations and decisions that involve all of our communities are especially important when we consider some of the key challenges facing our society, such as poverty, racism, climate change, and the cost of COVID-19.

Ideas and discussions about fairness are central to influencing how policies affect us now and in the future. Fairness can anchor conversations about important topics, such as housing, health, education, and the management of our natural environment.



## EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Equality and equity are concepts associated with fairness. These ideas are part of broader conversations about what it means to live well together, and about the kind of society that would truly enable that. These concepts can be found in philosophical traditions and are embedded in practices all around the world.



**FIGURE 1** – The boxes boost the height of the kiwifruit pickers. If everyone is treated equally, each person is given one box to stand on, whether or not they can already reach the vine. If everyone is treated equitably, the boxes are distributed according to height so that all three people can reach the vine. Illustration by Megan Salole.

**Equality**, at its most simple, means that all people are of equal worth or value and should be treated the same. For instance, in Aotearoa it would mean that vital social goods, such as education and healthcare, should be equally accessible to all. It would also mean that everyone's rights should be equally protected (38).

**Equity** requires that society also treats people according to their situation. Equity takes into consideration that people have varied backgrounds, needs, capabilities, and aspirations, and that different solutions are required to give everyone access to opportunities that enable them to succeed and prosper. It is the panel's view that working towards equitable processes and outcomes can help realise fair futures (23,34,39–41).

Figure 1 gives a simplified illustration of the concepts of equality and equity.

Inequities can make it harder for some groups to participate in the workforce or other aspects of society. For example, it is well established that women are underrepresented in the governance and senior management of many organisations. Studies in Aotearoa have also shown that women are paid less than men for the same mahi work and hours (42,43), and are not promoted as quickly as their male counterparts. Another example is that Māori and Pacific peoples are underrepresented in higher education roles, such as teaching at universities (44,45). There are also examples for many other groups in Aotearoa. These include the fact that disabled children and people under 65 are more likely than non-disabled people to live in households experiencing financial hardship and additional living costs (46,47).

## Equality and equity are concepts associated with fairness



People may have opposing views about the times when differences between individuals, such as age or gender, are relevant and when they are not. So, a commitment to equity requires that we first consider what equity means or requires in a given situation, and then how an equitable outcome can best be achieved. This could include such things as paying attention to historical inequities, considering what people’s basic needs are and how they are to be met, and how effort is assessed and rewarded.

For example, targeted scholarships or study allowances aim to increase access and inclusion in education and training (48). Governments often try to address different income levels equitably through tax and welfare transfer systems, where people on lower incomes pay proportionately less tax than those on higher incomes (49). These approaches attempt to create a more level playing field – acknowledging that there will be different views on what this means – where everyone has the capability<sup>§</sup> to participate in society, in relation to health, education, work, housing, the environment, transport, and many other spheres.

<sup>§</sup> Taking into account both ability and opportunity including internal abilities and external conditions.



## ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

One aspect of fairness people often discuss is the impact of differences in income and wealth (50,51). This is because access to resources affects our ability to participate in society and flourish (52,53). People and groups with greater income and wealth have more opportunities to access services and influence decisions than those with fewer resources. For example, they are more likely to have access to healthy housing and to have more choice about education and health services. There has been increased public and media attention to issues of income and wealth inequality over the past few decades (50,51).

### Income inequality

Income levels can influence many types of inequality (52). Evidence suggests that societies with lower levels of income inequality experience better educational, health, and wellbeing outcomes, and lower imprisonment rates, than those with greater levels of income inequality (22,52,53).

New Zealand's increase in income inequality from the mid 1980s to the mid 2000s (54–56) was the largest of all the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (57,58). During this period, the top 1% of the country's earners received the greatest income increases, while there was significantly less change for the bottom 40% (58).

### Wealth inequality

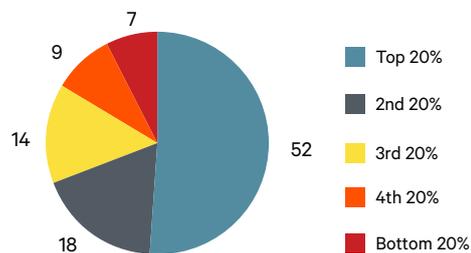
Wealth comes from the accumulation of income from, for example, employment, business profits, investment returns, and capital gains.

The gap in wealth between the rich and the poor is often underestimated. For example, a 2014 survey asked a cross-section of New Zealanders what their ideal distribution of wealth was, and what they estimated the reality to be (51). These results were compared with the actual distribution of wealth\*\* (Figure 2). They showed that wealth was spread less equally than most people believed, and that their ideal distribution would be significantly more equal than their estimate (51). These findings are consistent with studies in other countries, including Australia (59) and the United States (60).

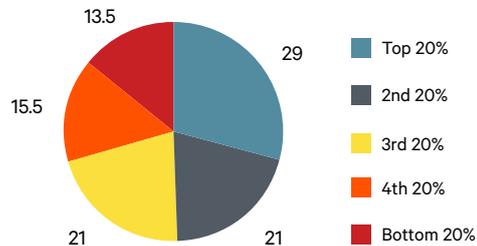
\*\* Defined as all financial and physical assets minus any debts a person owns.

Wealth is much more unevenly distributed than income (58,61). In New Zealand, most of the wealth is shared among a relatively small number of people (Figure 3) (62). A similar trend is seen across other OECD countries, with the top 10% of households owning approximately 50% of their country's wealth and the bottom 40% sharing just 3% of the wealth (58).

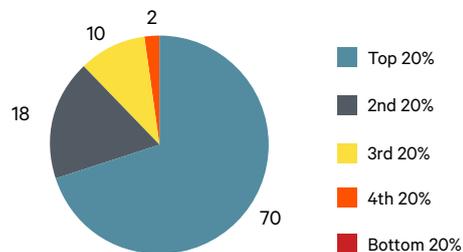
### How do you think wealth **IS** distributed in NZ?



### How do you think wealth **SHOULD** be distributed in NZ?



### How wealth is **ACTUALLY** distributed in NZ



**FIGURE 2** – A 2014 survey indicated that the New Zealand public thought the distribution of wealth was less equal than what they want in an ideal society (51).

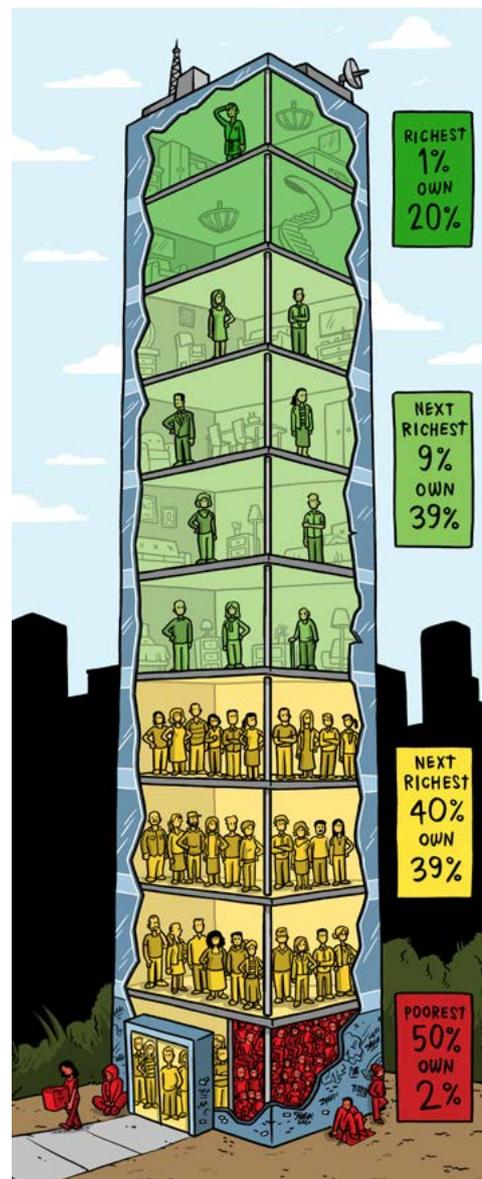
**FIGURE 3** – The wealthiest 1% of New Zealanders own 20% of the country’s wealth. The poorest 50% of individuals aged 15 and over share only 2% of the country’s wealth between them (62). Illustration by Toby Morris and Max Rashbrooke, first published in *The Spinoff* (63).

## Wellbeing

Wealth and income\*\* are financial capital, and only one measure of the value of an economy. Other aspects of wellbeing, such as social, human, and natural capital,\*\* are increasingly recognised by governments and societies as important (64–66). Wellbeing is central to the New Zealand Treasury’s Living Standards Framework (64). It acknowledges the value of different dimensions of wellbeing to society, including cultural identity, environment, social connections, and knowledge and skills.

\*\* It can often be difficult to compare income and wealth within and between countries due to the wide range of indicators and factors that can be used in calculating these values.

\*\*The four capitals: social, human, natural, and financial/physical are described in detail by the New Zealand Treasury as part of the Living Standards Frameworks (64,65).



## WHY A FAIR FUTURE MATTERS

When fairness is overlooked, inequality, social dysfunction, and lack of trust in others and in government institutions tend to grow – along with the risk of conflict (67–69). Moreover, perceptions of unfairness, combined with an unequal distribution of opportunities that matter, can lead to stereotyping, discrimination, and a lack of understanding about other groups in society. Discrimination against different communities can create vastly different outcomes for individuals across healthcare, hauora and wellbeing, education, justice, employment, and many other sectors of society (70–72).

Large disparities within or between countries, such as in the concentration of economic and political power, can harm economic growth, environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and population health (58,67,73). For example, many small island nations, including our Pacific neighbours, contribute very little to global greenhouse gas emissions yet face severe threats from climate change, such as rising sea levels and more intense storms (74). Between 2009 and 2019, nearly 25 million people worldwide were displaced annually because of disasters, most of these from climate-related hazards (75).

Calls for environmental and social change in Aotearoa and elsewhere are, in large part, grounded in concern about enabling people to live the kinds of lives they value. Our actions today determine the social, political, economic, and environmental circumstances that will prevail in the future. The lives of future generations will be shaped by what problems we leave behind, and by what measures, if any, we put in place to resolve them.

**Our actions today determine  
the lives of future generations**



## Impact of COVID-19 on fairness

During outbreaks of COVID-19 in Aotearoa, lives are being protected by mahi tahi everyone working together. Encouraged by the Government, we are each playing our part to be fair to hapori whānui the wider community. In lockdown, for example, we gave up our individual right to associate with others in order to keep our whole community safe. This has demonstrated that strong, quick collective action is possible – signalling that it is also possible to successfully address other major societal challenges, such as child poverty and climate change, if we have the will.

However, COVID-19 has also highlighted fairness in less positive ways. We have seen how the pandemic has created vulnerabilities, and exposed and reinforced existing ones. Its impact on people has been affected by multiple factors, including their race and gender, how secure their employment is, whether they are homeless, and whether they have a support network. Government decisions about the allocation of resources and services can highlight serious financial, educational, social, and health disparities between certain groups (68,76,77).

So, in thinking about fair futures, we must also consider who is vulnerable and why. We must consider historical and existing inequities, and various forms of injustice and discrimination.

COVID-19 is also creating new intergenerational fairness issues. Maintaining current living standards through the pandemic comes at a high cost, mostly through borrowing to fund measures such as wage subsidies and other employment support. How this debt will be paid for and shared between current and future generations is yet to be determined.

Importantly, major crises create opportunities to reflect on how we value one another. COVID-19 is encouraging new ways of thinking about significant social and environmental challenges. For example, there are reports that working from home has made employers more accommodating to hiring people with disabilities who need greater workplace flexibility (78). The New Zealand Government has provided temporary accommodation for homeless people (79), and provided additional resources to assist tamariki children to access education from home (80). Some countries, including New Zealand, China, France, India, and Spain have experienced a significant improvement in air quality as a result of people using less transport during lockdown (81–83).

## Universal rights and responsibilities

Fairness is also important in an international context. The United Nations promotes equal opportunities for all people to access basic universal rights, recognising that greatly unequal societies can exacerbate national and international instability. New Zealand, through Prime Minister Peter Fraser, played a key role in the founding of the United Nations in 1945 (84). The development of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflected the public's desire for societal change following the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II (1939–45). It emphasises the importance of reducing inequalities and enhancing social protection and social justice (67,85).

The United Nations calls for all countries to protect groups that experience recurring social injustices. Some prominent agreements that promote fairness, wellbeing, and inclusion of voices and perspectives include the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (86); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (87); and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (12). Aotearoa has ratified these conventions and endorsed the declaration (38,88,89).

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), several of which address issues related to achieving fairness both within and between countries (90). These 17 goals provide different pathways to realising universal human rights. Explicit SDG targets related to equity, equality, and fairness come under the goals of No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Reducing Inequalities, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (91). Aotearoa has an important role to play in the Pacific and beyond in working to reach these targets. A shared vision for achieving a fairer and more environmentally sustainable society through the perspectives of civil society, researchers, businesses, and young people is set out in Aotearoa's 2019 'People's Report' on the SDGs (92).

**Aotearoa led the world in women's voting rights and indigenous parliamentary seats**



Many of New Zealand's societal challenges, such as climate change and disease outbreaks, are linked to contemporary issues of global concern. These challenges – particularly around sustainability – require worldwide, collective action. Aotearoa has a history of pioneering global contributions, including equal voting rights for women, Māori parliamentary seats, and marriage equality. Many New Zealanders have also shown solidarity with international movements for change – for example, by protesting apartheid over many years, including during the 1981 Springbok tour (93,94), and by supporting the 2019 youth march for action on climate change (95,96).

Aotearoa's unique history and position as a culturally diverse, forward-thinking nation provides a whāriki platform from which we can realise te tapeke fair futures in Aotearoa, and show leadership in the pursuit of fairness globally.



## WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE PANEL?

The panel's intention is to raise public awareness of data and evidence that points to questions of fairness in Aotearoa, and to encourage New Zealanders to think about their own views on fairness and what a fair future would look like for them.

The panel's work will explore and profile some examples of how fairness matters across different areas of society, such as housing, health, education, justice, employment, and the economy. The panel will consider the drivers of the data in these areas, and highlight evidence from initiatives that address fairness-related issues here and overseas. Members of the panel will further support this mahi through their own expert commentary on particular aspects of fairness in Aotearoa.

A great deal is possible  
when we work together



In the meantime, we observe that a willingness to work as a nation and make sacrifices, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, is an uplifting reminder that a great deal is possible when we work together. Such commitment remains more important than ever as we chart a pathway forward. New Zealanders have a unique opportunity now to reflect on and rethink how we live, and to consider the environmental, economic, and social values we want to underpin a fairer future.

## OUR EXPERTS

### Members of the panel:

**Dame Lowell Goddard**, DMNZ, QC, Former New Zealand High Court Judge (co-convenor)

**Associate Professor Andrew Erueti**, University of Auckland (co-convenor)

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## Special contributors

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