



New Zealand's Governor-General

The Governor-General is a symbol of unity and leadership, with the holder of the Office fulfilling important constitutional, ceremonial, international, and community roles.

"As Governor-General, I welcome opportunities to acknowledge success and achievements, and to champion those who are prepared to assume leadership roles – whether at school, community, local or central government, in the public or private sector. I want to encourage greater diversity within our leadership, drawing on the experience of all those who have chosen to make New Zealand their home, from tangata whenua through to our most recent arrivals from all parts of the world. We have an extraordinary opportunity to maximise that human potential.

Above all, I want to fulfil New Zealanders' expectations of this unique and complex role."

The Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy

Kia ora, nga mihi ki a koutou Welcome

As New Zealand's 21st Governor-General, I am honoured to undertake the duties and responsibilities of the representative of the Queen of New Zealand. Since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the role of the Sovereign's representative has changed – and will continue to do so as every Governor and Governor-General makes his or her own contribution to the Office, to New Zealand and to our sense of national and cultural identity.

This booklet offers an insight into the role the Governor-General plays in contemporary New Zealand. Here you will find a summary of the constitutional responsibilities, and the international, ceremonial, and community leadership activities a Governor-General undertakes.

It will be my privilege to build on the legacy of my predecessors.



The Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, GNZM, QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand



The Governor-General of New Zealand is appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of New Zealand to serve as the representative of the Head of State, the Queen of New Zealand.

The Governor-General is a symbol of unity and leadership, with the holder of the Office fulfilling important constitutional, ceremonial, international, and community leadership roles.

New Zealand's Head of State is non-partisan and is not involved in the 'business' of government, which is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

This arrangement is best described by the saying that 'while the Sovereign reigns, the Government rules'.

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy and neither the Governor-General nor the Queen takes an active or initiating role in the executive functions of Government. By convention the Head of State, or her representative, acts on the advice of Ministers of the Crown, except on rare occasions such as when appointing a Prime Minister after an election.



The changing role of New Zealand's Governor-General

In the more than 170 years since the first Governor, William Hobson, was appointed, the role of Governor and, from 1917, Governor-General, has changed as New Zealand has evolved from a dependent colony to an independent nation.

The Governors and early Governors-General were appointed on the advice of the British Government not only to undertake the duties of the Sovereign, but also to represent its interests and those of the Empire. Colonial premiers and prime ministers who wanted to communicate with their British counterparts had to do so through Government House, a link which New Zealand retained until 1941.

New Zealand ceased to be a colony in 1907 when it became a Dominion within the British Empire. When New Zealand adopted the Statute of Westminster in 1947, the British Parliament could no longer legislate for this country without the request and consent of the New Zealand Parliament. With this change, the role of the Governor-General formally changed to being solely the Sovereign's representative.

Until the late 1960s, New Zealand Governors and Governors-General were from the British military or aristocracy. From the appointment of the first New Zealand-born Governor-General Sir Arthur Porritt in 1967, the first New Zealand-resident Governor-General Sir Denis Blundell in 1972, the first Maori, Sir Paul Reeves in 1985,

the first woman, Dame Catherine Tizard in 1990, and the first of Indian and Pacific descent, Sir Anand Satyanand in 2006, the role continues to evolve. Their backgrounds have been equally varied, with four having been judges and one each having been a general, mayor, archbishop, surgeon, diplomat, and a farmer and prime minister.

In the past, foreign ambassadors presented their New Zealand credentials to the Monarch – now they travel to New Zealand and present them to the Governor-General. Likewise, New Zealand Governors-General have increasingly travelled overseas, representing all New Zealanders at major international events and generally promoting New Zealand interests abroad.

The Governor-General of the 21st Century is a New Zealander who represents the best of our country to New Zealand and the world.





New Zealand's constitution

New Zealand is an independent sovereign nation. Because it is a constitutional monarchy, New Zealand is called a 'Realm'. The Realm of New Zealand comprises New Zealand, Tokelau, the Ross Dependency and the self-governing states of the Cook Islands and Niue.

The Governor-General is the representative of the Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of New Zealand. The office and powers of the Governor-General are set out in the Letters Patent Constituting the Office of Governor-General of New Zealand. The Letters Patent were completely revised in 1983 and amended in 1987 and 2006. The Queen appoints the Governor-General on the advice of New Zealand's Prime Minister, usually for a term of five years.

New Zealand is often incorrectly described as not having a 'written constitution'. New Zealand has a constitution, but it is not all in one document, and it includes crucial pieces of legislation, several legal documents, common law derived from court decisions as well as established constitutional practices known as conventions. Increasingly, New Zealand's constitution reflects the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document of government in New Zealand.

The Constitution Act 1986 is a key formal statement of New Zealand's system of government. The Act recognises the Queen as the Head of State of New Zealand and the Governor-General as her representative.

Other laws that outline the powers and functions of the three branches of government (that is, the executive, legislative, and judiciary) in more detail include the State Sector Act 1988, the Electoral Act 1993, the Senior Courts Act 2016 and the District Court Act 2016. Other important legislation includes the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, the Ombudsmen Act 1975, the Official Information Act 1982, the Public Finance Act 1989, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993. Some British laws, such as parts of the Magna Carta 1297 and the Bill of Rights 1688, and the Act of Settlement 1700, have been incorporated into New Zealand law by the Imperial Laws Application Act 1988.

The Head of State's constitutional role

The Sovereign and the House of Representatives together make up the Parliament of New Zealand.

The Governor-General, as the Queen's representative, signs into law bills that have been passed by the House of Representatives. The Governor-General also presides at meetings of the Executive Council where Ministers of the Crown, who are also Council members, present regulations for signature.

By convention, the Governor-General is bound, with rare exception, to act on the advice of Ministers who have the support of the House of Representatives. It is the duty of Ministers to keep the Governor-General informed about government business. As well as having the right to be consulted, the Governor-General may also encourage and warn Ministers.

On the advice of Ministers, the Governor-General appoints members of the judiciary, justices of the peace and other key public officials, including the members of independent crown entities, such as the Law Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Authority. The Governor-General also signs the commissions of officers of the New Zealand Defence Force and the warrants for Royal Commissions of Inquiry and may exercise the Royal prerogative of mercy.

The Reserve Powers

In a very few instances, the Governor-General may exercise a degree of personal discretion, under what are known as the 'reserve powers'. The most important of these is the appointment of a Prime Minister following an election, or accepting the resignation of an incumbent Prime Minister.

By convention, the Governor-General will always appoint as Prime Minister the person who has been identified through the government formation process as the person who will lead the party or group of parties that appears able to command the confidence of the House of Representatives. The Governor-General expects that there will be clear and public statements that a political agreement has been reached and that a government can be formed that will have the support of the

new Parliament. The Governor-General abides by the outcome of the government formation process.

Other reserve powers are to dismiss a Prime Minister, to force a dissolution of Parliament and call new elections, to refuse a Prime Minister's request for an election, and to refuse assent to legislation.

These powers to act without or even against ministerial advice are reserved for the most extreme situations and, with the exception of the appointment of a Prime Minister following an election (which is a normal part of the election process), no New Zealand Governor-General has ever needed to use the Reserve Powers.

The Governor-General's role

Constitutional

The Governor-General's constitutional role is to maintain the legitimacy and continuity of government by ensuring there is always a government in office with a democratic mandate to govern. Legitimacy is the foundation of civil peace and the order that is maintained by the rule of law.

Some of the Governor-General's constitutional roles include signing the proclamation that dissolves Parliament before a general election is held, formally appointing as Prime Minister the leader of the political party who has the support of a majority in the House of Representatives, and giving the Speech from the Throne at the State Opening of Parliament.

The Governor-General's formal title includes the phrase 'Commander-in-Chief in and over New Zealand', but he or she does not play an active role in military matters.

Ceremonial

The Governor-General represents the Queen and New Zealanders at important public ceremonies, including Waitangi Day and Anzac Day commemorations.

The Governor-General also holds investiture ceremonies where New Zealand honours are conferred. These ceremonies are an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of New Zealanders in fields as diverse as sport, science, business, education, the law, the arts, and public and community service.

International

At the request of the Prime Minister, Governors-General represent New Zealand on the international stage—undertaking state visits to enhance relations between New Zealand and other countries as well as attending important ceremonies overseas. The Governor-General also hosts formal State Welcome ceremonies for visiting Heads of State at Government House as well as receiving the credentials of foreign ambassadors and high commissioners to New Zealand.

Community leadership

The Governor-General provides non-partisan community leadership. The Governor-General is the patron of many charitable, service, sporting, cultural and community organisations. This follows the tradition of royal patronage established in the United Kingdom, although the practice of granting Royal Warrants and Royal Charters has not been continued in New Zealand.

Many of the Governor-General's community functions also have a ceremonial dimension, such as officially opening new buildings, schools and other facilities, giving addresses to open or close conferences, presenting awards, or launching special events and appeals.

The Governor-General's community role takes up much of his or her time. During most years, the Governor-General will host or attend several hundred functions at Government House and throughout the country.

During regular regional visits, the Governor-General meets and talks with New Zealanders from all walks of life.

Administrator of the Government

The Letters Patent provide for an order of succession if the Office of Governor-General is vacant or the Governor-General is incapacitated, outside the country or otherwise unable to perform his or her duties. This 'acting Governor-General' is known as the Administrator of the Government. First in line of succession is the Chief Justice followed by the next most senior member of the New Zealand judiciary. The Administrator takes an oath similar to that of the Governor-General and may exercise all of the Governor-General's powers.





Dame Patsy Reddy

Dame Patsy was born in Matamata and raised in the Waikato district. She completed her schooling at Hillcrest Primary School, Peachgrove Intermediate and Hamilton Girls High School.

Dame Patsy studied law, graduating with an LLB in 1976 and an LLM in 1979 from Victoria University of Wellington. She joined the Law Faculty as a Junior Lecturer and subsequently as a Lecturer.

In 1982 she joined the law firm Watts and Patterson (now Minter Ellison Rudd Watts), and became the first female partner in 1983, specialising in tax, corporate and film law. In 1987 she joined Brierley Investments Ltd as Group Legal Counsel and subsequently became Group Manager for Special Projects. In 1999 she and two colleagues co-founded Active Equities Limited, a private investment company.

Dame Patsy has had extensive experience in governance and consulting roles, both in the private and public sector, including roles in the New Zealand Film Commission, New Zealand Post, NZ Markets Disciplinary Tribunal and as a Chief Crown Negotiator of Treaty Settlements for Tauranga Moana and Te Toko Toru.

Dame Patsy has also had significant involvement in governance of creative and charitable organisations, including as Trustee of the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts, the Wellington Jazz Festival Trust, and the Symphony Orchestra Foundation. She was a founding Trustee and advisory board member for New Zealand Global Women and has chaired the Board of the New Zealand Film Archive.

In 2014 she became a Dame Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (DNZM) for services to the arts and business.

Dame Patsy is married to Sir David Gascoigne and they divide their time between Wellington and the Wairarapa. Her interests include the arts in all forms - but especially film, the visual arts and opera.

Sir David Gascoigne

Sir David grew up in Blenheim. He attended Springlands School, then Marlborough College. He graduated from Victoria University attaining LLB and LLM.

He was a partner and Chair of the law firm Watts & Patterson which became Minter Ellison Rudd Watts.



He has also served as a director of many New Zealand companies in both the private and public sectors.

Sir David has been heavily involved with the arts, serving as Chair of the NZ Federation of Film Societies, the NZ Film Commission, the NZ International Festival of the Arts, the NZ Film Production Fund Trust and New Zealand Opera. He has also been involved with the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, the National Arts Gallery Council and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

In 2005, he was Chair of the Rugby World Cup 2011 Bid Advisory Committee, which prepared and oversaw the successful bid for hosting the Rugby World Cup tournament in New Zealand in 2011. He has subsequently acted in an advisory role to NZ Rugby.

From 2009-2015 he served as New Zealand's Judicial Conduct Commissioner.

Sir David was awarded a CBE for services to film in 1988. He received a Knighthood for services to the arts and business in 2009.



The New Zealand Honours System

The Governor-General, on behalf of the Queen, holds investiture ceremonies for the people named in the New Year and Queen's Birthday Honours Lists and in Special Honours Lists. Except for those honours that the Queen personally provides, all awards are made on the advice of the Prime Minister.

New Zealand's highest honour is the Order of New Zealand, with a maximum ordinary membership of 20. The Order was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1987 and is awarded for 'outstanding service to the Crown and people of New Zealand in a civil or military capacity'.

The New Zealand Order of Merit was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1996 and has five classes. A third New Zealand honour is the Queen's Service Order and the associated Queen's Service Medal, which was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1975 (updated in 2007).

The New Zealand Gallantry Awards recognise those military, and certain other categories of support personnel, who perform acts of gallantry while involved in war and operational service, including peacekeeping.

The New Zealand Bravery Awards recognise the actions of those persons who save or attempt to save the life of another person and in the course of which they place their own safety or life at risk.

New Zealanders wanting to nominate a person for public recognition can submit recommendations to the Prime Minister or the Honours Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Nomination forms are available from the offices of MPs or the Honours website (www.honours.govt.nz).



Government House Wellington

Government House Wellington is a large, two-storey house, built mostly of wood with a floor area of about 4200 square metres. It has eight guest suites, a self-contained apartment for the Governor-General and his/her spouse and family, as well as a ballroom, conservatory, sitting rooms, service rooms, kitchens and a wing of offices.

Located near the Basin Reserve, it was built between 1908 and 1910 and was designed in the office of the Government Architect, John Campbell, the designer of Parliament Buildings, principally by his assistant, Claude Paton. The first vice-regal resident was Lord Islington in 1910.

The extensive grounds cover about 12 hectares, some of which is flat lawn or garden with much of the rest being steep hillside. In the late 1990s, the grounds were extensively redeveloped and re-landscaped.

In March 2011, the House reopened after a major conservation project that began in late 2008.

Free guided tours of Government House Wellington can be arranged through the Government House Visitor Centre: www.gg.govt.nz/tours





Government House Auckland

There have been a number of Government Houses in Auckland. The current House was gifted by the Mappin family to the Queen to be the Governor-General's official residence in Auckland in 1962.

The site of Government House Auckland was first built upon in the 1880s or 1890s. The House is much smaller than Government House Wellington, being originally designed as a family home.

Sir Frank and Lady Mappin bought the property in 1921 and spent the next 45 years developing and landscaping the grounds. In 2005, a major refurbishment was completed, including the addition of a pavilion that allows investiture ceremonies and other larger gatherings to be held.

The garden at Government House Auckland is a rare survivor from an era when many city homes had large landscaped grounds. Some of the trees date from the 1870s and the garden retains lava outcrops and the original vegetation that were once a feature of the area (image top left).

Historic Government Houses

The first Government House in Wellington was Colonel William Wakefield's villa, near the main steps of Parliament Buildings.

The second Government House in Wellington, built in 1868, was a large timber mansion that stood on the site of the present Executive Wing of Parliament Buildings. In 1907 it was taken for use as the Parliamentary Debating Chamber after the General Assembly building was destroyed by fire. It later became the parliamentary restaurant, Bellamy's, until it was demolished in 1969 (image top right).

There was also a Government House in Palmerston North, where the Governor, Lord Plunket, lived while Government House was being used by Parliament after the 1907 fire. It is now part of Massey University and is known as Caccia Birch House.

Wellington's Hutt Valley also had a Government House. Vogel House in Lower Hutt, renamed Government House Vogel, served as the Governor-General's residence in the capital in 2009 and 2010 during the Government House conservation project.

Lieutenant-Governors, Governors and Governors-General of New Zealand

Lieutenant-Governor

Captain William Hobson, RN, 1840-1841
(under Lt-Col Sir George Gipps, RE, Governor of New South Wales 1837-1846, and Governor-in-Chief of New Zealand 1839-1841)

Governor

Captain William Hobson, RN, 1841-1842
Captain Robert Fitzroy, RN, 1843-1845
Captain George Grey, 1845-1847

Governor-in-Chief

Sir George Grey, KCB, 1848-1853

Governor of New Zealand

Sir George Grey, KCB, 1853-1853
Colonel Thomas Gore Browne, CB, 1855-1861
Sir George Grey, KCB, 1861-1868
Sir George Ferguson Bowen, GCMG, 1868-1873
Rt Hon Sir James Fergusson, Bt, PC, 1873-1874
Marquess of Normanby, GCB, GCMG, PC, 1875-1879
Sir Hercules Robinson, GCMG, 1879-1880
Hon Sir Arthur Gordon, GCMG, 1880-1882
Lt General Sir William Jervois, GCMG, CB, 1883-1889
Earl of Onslow, GCMG, 1889-1892
Earl of Glasgow, GCMG, 1892-1897
Earl of Ranfurly, GCMG, 1897-1904
Lord Plunket, GCMG, KCVO, 1904-1910
Lord Islington, KCMG, DSO, PC, 1910-1912
Earl of Liverpool, GCB, GCMG, GBE, MVO, PC 1912-1917

Governor-General of New Zealand

Earl of Liverpool, GCB, GCMG, GBE, MVO, PC, 1917-1920
Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe, GCB, OM, GCVO, 1920-1924
General Sir Charles Fergusson, Bt, GCMG, KCB, DSO, MVO, 1924-1930
Viscount Bledisloe, GCMG, KBE, PC, 1930-1935
Viscount Galway, GCMG, DSO, OBE, PC, 1935-1941
Marshal of the RAF Sir Cyril Newall, GCB, OM, GCMG, CBE, AM, 1941-1946
Lt General Rt Hon Lord Freyberg, VC, GCMG, KCB, KBE, DSO, 1946-1952
Lt General Lord Norrie, GCMG, GCVO, CB, DSO, MC, 1952-1957
Viscount Cobham, GCMG, GCVO, TD, 1957-1962
Brigadier Sir Bernard Fergusson, GCMG, GCVO, DSO, OBE, 1962-1967
Sir Arthur Porritt, Bt, GCMG, GCVO, CBE, 1967-1972
Sir Denis Blundell, GCMG, GCVO, KBE, QSO, 1972-1977
Rt Hon Sir Keith Holyoake, KG, GCMG, CH, QSO, 1977-1980
Hon Sir David Beattie, GCMG, GCVO, QSO, QC, 1980-1985
Rt Rev & Hon Sir Paul Reeves, GCMG, GCVO, QSO, 1985-1990
Hon Dame Catherine Tizard, GCMG, GCVO, DBE, QSO, 1990-1996
Rt Hon Sir Michael Hardie Boys, GNZM, GCMG, QSO, 1996-2001
Hon Dame Silvia Cartwright PCNZM, DBE, QSO, 2001-2006
Rt Hon Sir Anand Satyanand, GNZM, QSO, 2006-2011
Lt General Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, GNZM, QSO, 2011- 2016
Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, GNZM, QSO, 2016-





Further reading

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