



# **CONSTITUTION 2024**

[Adopted 24 June 2023  
With Amendments 2024]

## **1 NAME**

- 1.1. The name of the organisation shall be the Women's Rights Party of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 1.2. The Women's Rights Party of Aotearoa New Zealand shall be an unincorporated society operating as a political party for the purposes of the Electoral Act 1993.

## **2 PRINCIPLES**

The Women's Rights Party is a party of women and men who believe in democracy, equality, and the biological reality that sex is binary and, therefore, human beings cannot change their sex. Hence, women are adult humans of the female sex.

The Party honours the women of Aotearoa NZ, who won the right to vote in 1893, the first self-governing nation in the World to legislate women's suffrage.

The Women's Rights Party has formed 130 years later out of a concern for the erosion of the rights of women and girls.

We combine this history with the imperative to create a society in which women are autonomous, and all women, men and children can live in harmony with each other and the environment to protect the future for our children and their children.

### **The Women's Rights Party principles are:**

To win and protect women's rights, including:

- 2.1 The right to speak freely.
- 2.2 The right to peaceful assembly, association, and movement.
- 2.3 The right to safe single-sex spaces for women and girls.
- 2.4 The right to be free from violence in all its forms.
- 2.5 The right to equitable reward and recognition for women's contributions to society and work, whether paid or unpaid.
- 2.6 The right to have control of our own bodies, including reproductive autonomy.
- 2.7 The right to protect and safeguard our children.
- 2.8 The right for motherhood to be recognised as exclusively female.
- 2.9 The right to fair play in sports.
- 2.10 The right to evidenced-based education and healthcare with informed consent.
- 2.11 The right to use clear and plain language when referring to women in the media, academia, in healthcare, at work and at home.
- 2.12 The right to a safe and clean environment.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

#### **The objectives of the Women's Rights Party are:**

- 3.1 To organise and advocate for women's and girls' sex-based rights.
- 3.2 To contest Parliamentary and local body elections as an independent Party of women candidates.
- 3.3 To win seats in Parliament and on local authorities to enable us to progress and further protect women's rights.
- 3.4 To unite women and our allies, allowing different ideas and perspectives to be discussed within the Party in an environment of tolerance and respect.
- 3.5 To build links in solidarity with all those advocating for justice and equality for women and girls in Aotearoa NZ and internationally.
- 3.6 To influence cross party policy to promote and uphold the rights and status of women and girls.
- 3.7 To promote the legitimate reasons to distinguish between the sexes including, but not limited to, the recognition of biological reality.
- 3.8 To ensure policies and laws that distinguish between the sexes forbid unfair discrimination against similarly-situated males and females, but these policies and laws may distinguish between the sexes where such distinctions are substantially related to important societal objectives such as fairness, dignity, safety, and/or privacy.
- 3.9 To monitor and ensure all Government Departments, Crown Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations that collect vital statistics for the purpose of complying with anti-discrimination laws, or for the purpose of gathering accurate public health, crime, economic or other data, shall identify each individual who is part of the collected data set as either male or female at birth.

### **4 DEFINITIONS**

- 4.1 A person's "sex" refers to a person's biological sex (either male or female).
- 4.2 "Sex" is a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Human Rights Act 1993, including in pregnancy and childbirth.
- 4.3 "Women" and "girls" refer to human females, and the words "men" and "boys" refer to human males.
- 4.4 "Human female" denotes the sex with a reproductive system typically organised to bear offspring or produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes (ova) that can be fertilised by male gametes, and includes females whose reproductive system may be disordered in some way and those females who choose not to reproduce.
- 4.5 "Mother" means female parent and "father" means male parent.
- 4.6 "Sexual orientation" is a person's sexual attraction to the same sex, opposite sex, or both.

## **5 DECISION-MAKING**

The Party will use consensus decision-making wherever possible, with a culture of respectful conflict resolution.

If consensus is not achieved after reasonable attempts, a vote can be taken. A motion shall be carried with a 66% majority to amend the Constitution or 50% +1 majority in all other matters of the votes cast by those eligible to vote. Those who do not agree with the vote may have their dissent recorded at their request.

## **6 MEMBERSHIP**

- 6.1 Any person of at least 15 years of age may make an application to join the Women's Rights Party.
- 6.2 Any person may be approved for membership by the Women's Rights Party Council (hereafter referred to as "the Council") who:
  - 6.2.1 Agrees with the Principles, Objectives and Rules of the Women's Rights Party Constitution.
  - 6.2.2 Acts within the Women's Rights Party Constitution.
  - 6.2.4 Abides by decisions made in accordance with the Women's Rights Party Constitution.
  - 6.2.5 Pays the appropriate annual membership fee.
- 6.3 New members shall be advised of the acceptance of their membership.
- 6.4 On acceptance, financial members shall be entitled to attend and participate in Women's Rights Party local group and regional meetings and Annual Conference, but only women members shall be entitled to stand for office-holders' positions at all levels of the Party.
- 6.5 Any woman who is a financial member of the Women's Rights Party shall be eligible for the candidate pool if nominated by four financial members of the Party and having signed the Candidates' Pledge. The Council may veto individual candidates.
- 6.6 Any financial member who is resident in the Region and enrolled to vote shall be entitled to vote for candidates in local selections.
- 6.7 The financial term of Women's Rights Party members is 12 months. Where members are 15 months overdue, they shall be deemed to be un-financial and shall lose membership rights. Members paying regularly by direct credit shall automatically have their membership renewed.
- 6.8 The Council may decline a membership application that the Council believes does not meet the criteria outlined in 6.2. The applicant shall be advised in writing of the decision. The applicant may appeal that decision at the next Council meeting where the decision shall be final.
- 6.9 A member may resign from the Party by notifying the National Secretary in writing.

## **7 WOMEN'S RIGHTS PARTY COUNCIL**

### 7.1 Membership

7.1.1 Co-leaders (2)

7.1.2 Regional Co-ordinators (12): Northland; West Auckland/North Shore; the Isthmus; Counties Manukau; Waikato; Bay of Plenty; Eastern Mid Central; Western Mid-Central; Wellington; Top of the South/West Coast; Canterbury; Southern

7.1.3 Policy Convenors (3)

7.1.4 Secretariat (National Secretary; Membership Secretary; Treasurer)

7.1.5 No MP may hold any position on the Council except as a Co-Leader.

7.1.6 The Council shall not exceed 20 members.

### 7.2 Election of Council members

7.2.1 The Co-leaders and Policy Convenors are elected at the Annual Conference.

7.2.2 The Regional Co-ordinators may be elected at regional hui meetings or at the following Annual Conference

7.2.3 If any extraordinary vacancy arises for the positions of either of the Co-leaders or Policy Convenors, then the Council may fill the vacancy at any Council meeting, or the position may be filled by election at that the following Annual Conference.

7.2.4 In the event of an extraordinary vacancy for the Regional Co-ordinator, the region shall convene an in-person or virtual meeting to agree on a replacement until the next regional meeting, or the position may be filled by election at the following Annual Conference.

7.2.5 The National Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer shall be appointed by the Council.

### 7.3 Authority of the Council

The Conference is the supreme decision-making body of the Party. The Council acts on behalf of the members between Conferences.

7.3.1 Oversee the operation of the Party.

7.3.2 Set membership fees and approve the national Budget.

7.3.3 Confirm constitutional decisions and approve urgent Policy changes and statements.

7.3.4 Approve Election policy platform and campaign.

7.3.5 Approve the formation of networks and annually review such networks.

7.3.6 Approve affiliations with other groups that align with the principles and objectives of the Party.

- 7.3.7 Suspend membership of individuals and Party organisations in accordance with the rules of the Constitution.
- 7.3.8 Approve candidates into the candidate pool and provide the initial ranking of candidates on the List to be voted by the members of the Party.
- 7.3.9 Determine how many and which electorate seats to contest in consultation with the local and regional organisations, and participate in the selection of candidates to stand in those seats.
- 7.3.10 Appoint the National Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer.
- 7.3.11 Appoint an auditor for purposes of the Electoral Act.
- 7.3.12 Make statements in response to events, which are in accordance with the Women's Rights Party Principles, Objectives and Policy.

#### 7.4 Meetings of the Council

- 7.4.1 The Council shall meet at least four times a year with at least one meeting to be face-to-face. Meetings will be scheduled every three months with the ability of any Council member to call for an extraordinary meeting as needed. The quorum shall be 60% of those entitled to attend.
- 7.4.2 The Secretariat shall meet at least fortnightly, which can be by Zoom, to process administrative matters, such as approval of expenses within the Budget. The National Secretary shall report to the Council on income and expenses by email each fortnight.
- 7.4.3 The Policy Convenors may attend Secretariat meetings to provide input into decisions regarding media releases and submissions with urgent policy changes to be reported to the Council for their approval as per clause 7.3.3.
- 7.4.4 Regional Co-ordinators may attend Secretariat meetings, but their attendance and that of the Policy Convenors would not be required for the purpose of meeting a quorum.

## **8 LOCAL ORGANISATION**

- 8.1 Local groups may form in a locality and will elect a Convenor who will liaise with the Regional Co-ordinator.
- 8.2 The role of local groups is to organise activities in their geographical area and to encourage membership engagement, including in policy development, candidate selection and political action.
- 8.3 Local groups may have rules about speaking rights to ensure that women can speak. Members of the Council may attend and address local group meetings.

- 8.4 Local groups shall regularly forward membership applications and fees to the National Secretary, along with changes to current membership details.
- 8.5 Local groups have the right to attend and participate in the following Women's Rights Party meetings:
- 8.5.1 Regional Meetings
  - 8.5.2 Annual Conference
- Delegate representation may be determined by the Council if limits are needed on numbers attending. In this case, delegations shall be based on the number of financial members as of 31 December or 30 June, dependent on the timing of the Conference.

## **9 REGIONAL MEETINGS / REGIONAL CO-ORDINATOR**

- 9.1 The Regional Co-ordinator shall form an organising group to convene the Annual Regional Meeting based on regional boundaries in 7.1.2.
- 9.2 Other regional meetings may be convened to organise regional activities. All members of the region must be given at least seven days' notice of any regional meeting.
- 9.3 Regions may have rules about speaking rights to ensure that women can speak at regional meetings. Members of the Council may attend and address regional meetings.
- 9.4 The Regional Co-ordinator is responsible for:
- 9.4.1 Reporting to Council on the activities of local groups in the region.
  - 9.4.2 Reporting to Council on regionally based political, educational and organisational activity.
  - 9.4.4 Establishing a communications network / telephone tree with local convenors to ensure members can fully participate in the activities of the Region.
  - 9.4.5 Forming an organising group to convene Regional Meeting.
  - 9.4.6 Encouraging activities related to increasing membership numbers.

## **10 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

- 10.1 Authority of Conference:
- 10.1.1 The Annual Conference is the supreme decision-making body of the Party. Conference decisions will be forwarded to the Council for action.
  - 10.1.2 Discuss and agree on policy, including policy remits submitted through local groups, regional meetings, and policy convenors.
  - 10.1.3 Discuss and agree on constitutional changes.

- 10.1.4 Approve Council reports.
- 10.1.5 Elect two Co-Leaders and three Policy convenors.
- 10.1.6 Any other matter as approved by the Council.
- 10.2 The Annual Conference is to be held nationally once in each calendar year. It may be face-to-face or virtually.
  - 10.2.1 The Conference agenda and remits must be circulated no later than six weeks prior, with provisions for items of special business as approved by the Council.
  - 10.2.2 Nominations for the positions of Co-Leaders and Policy convenors shall be closed and circulated to all constituent bodies six weeks prior to the Conference, unless the Council agrees to an extension of the nomination deadline.
  - 10.2.3 The Council has the right to set numbers attending the Conference using a set ratio of delegates in relation to local membership.
  - 10.2.4 Conference shall adopt speaking rules in such a manner to ensure that women have preferential rights to speak.

## **11 CAUCUS**

- 11.1 The Parliamentary Caucus shall determine the management of parliamentary work and activities to advance the Women's Rights Party Objectives in accordance with Council decisions and policies as set by Conference.
- 11.2 The members of the Parliamentary Caucus shall include:
  - 11.2.1 The Party Co-Leaders who shall convene and chair Caucus meetings.
  - 11.2.2 The Party Members of Parliament.
  - 11.2.3 The National Secretary.
  - 11.2.4 Two representatives elected by the Council.
  - 11.2.5 One Policy representative.

## **12 POLICY PROCESS**

- 12.1 Policy development will be led by three Policy Convenors who shall be elected to the Council by the Annual Conference.
- 12.2 Policy Convenors will form groups of financial members with special interest and expertise on specific topics to formulate Policy within the Party. Members may also contribute to policy development by submitting policy proposals to be called for prior to regional meetings.
- 12.3 New policies or changes to existing policy must be approved by Annual Conference following discussion by members in local groups and at regional meetings. Any new policies or policy changes for



consideration at Conference must have been circulated at least six weeks prior.

## **13 CANDIDATE SELECTION**

### **13.1 Electorate Selection process**

- 13.1.1 All nominees for electorate seats, including in the event of a by-election, shall be nominated into the candidate pool by two financial members and approved by the Council.
- 13.1.2 Nominees into the candidate pool shall state the electorate for which they intend to stand. The Council shall make the decision as to whether to contest an electorate seat, or not.
- 13.1.3 In the event of an approved electorate contest, a date for a confirmation or selection meeting shall be set by Council in consultation with local group convenors and the regional co-ordinator.
- 13.1.4 Each financial Party member who is resident in the Region and enrolled to vote (the "eligible members"), shall be advised of the meeting arrangements no later than seven days prior to the confirmation or selection meeting. Meetings may be held in-person or remotely.
- 13.1.5 In the event of an approved electorate contest for which there is only one Women's Rights candidate from the candidate pool, the eligible members present at the confirmation meeting shall endorse or reject the sole nominee by a simple majority vote, i.e. 50% + 1.
- 13.1.6 In the event of a contested selection for which there are two or more Women's Rights Party candidates from the candidate pool, the candidates shall have the opportunity to present themselves and to respond to questions from the members.
- 13.1.7 The candidates shall then leave the meeting and the eligible members present shall discuss the attributes of the candidates. Their decision, based on a simple majority vote, i.e. the floor vote, shall be communicated only to the selection panel.
- 13.1.8 One of the Co-leaders will be appointed by the Council to chair the selection meeting and to represent the Party on the selection panel.
- 13.1.9 The selection panel shall also comprise a representative elected by the eligible members present at the confirmation by a simple majority vote, i.e. 50% + 1.
- 13.1.9 If the representative elected by the meeting and the Council representative cannot agree on the successful candidate, the floor vote as in 13.1.7 becomes the determinant.
- 13.1.10 The successful candidate shall automatically be eligible for the Party list.

## **14.2 List Selection Process**

- 14.2.1 All candidates elected into the candidate pool are eligible to stand for the Party List.
- 14.2.2 The names and biographies of nominees for the Party List will be circulated to members by the National Secretary six weeks before the date for registering the List with the Electoral Commission.
- 14.2.3 Each region will hold a regional meeting within 30 days of the distribution of List nominees to ensure that financial members in the region have a reasonable opportunity to participate in forming an indicative List ranking.
- 14.2.4 List candidates will have the opportunity to speak and to answer questions, or they may choose to prepare a brief video presentation.
- 14.2.5 Eligible members will assign the candidates to each List position starting at position number one, by a simple majority vote.
- 14.2.6 The process continues until all candidates have been ranked.
- 14.2.7 The Regional List rankings will be forwarded to the Council which will convene a Moderating Committee meeting to produce a List, based on the Regional List rankings and taking into account national strategic considerations:
- 14.2.8 The decisions of the Moderating Committee are final and will be submitted by the National Secretary to the Electoral Commission before the notified deadline.

## **15 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

- 15.1 Disciplinary action may be brought against any member who:
  - 15.1.1 Refuses to comply with the Constitution.
  - 15.1.2 Improperly deals with any funds of the Women's Rights Party.
  - 15.1.4 Wilfully undermines the Women's Rights Party's objectives.
  - 15.1.5 Has been found to be guilty of a harassment complaint against them through the Women's Rights Party Harassment Procedures.
  - 15.1.6 In any other way wilfully brings the Women's Rights Party or its members into public disrepute.
  - 15.1.7 Nothing in the disciplinary procedures should prevent members from holding minority views within the Party as long as they abide by the decisions of the Council.
- 15.2 A complaint against a member for any of the above reasons shall first be communicated in writing to the National Secretary who shall, in the first instance, try to resolve the matter with the individuals concerned.

- 15.3 If this procedure is inappropriate, or has not resolved the matter, the National Secretary shall refer the complaint to the Council, which shall establish a grievance committee of three members.
- 15.4 Any grievance committee established shall, throughout an enquiry, observe the principles of natural justice, and in particular:
- 15.4.1 Must make available promptly to the parties involved full details of the nature of the enquiry and of allegations made; and
- 15.4.2 Must give any party against whom allegations are made notice of at least 14 days of a hearing. Any member being interviewed by the grievance committee shall be entitled to have a representative of their choosing present.
- 15.5 The Grievance Committee shall communicate its findings and reasons for them in writing to the parties. Where appropriate, the Grievance Committee may recommend a remedy, or in the case of serious matters, may recommend penalties, which may include censure, suspension or expulsion from the Women's Rights Party.
- 15.6 Any party to the proceedings may, within seven days of being notified of such resolution, appeal to the Council against the Grievance Committee's decision. The decision of the Council (or the Grievance Committee if not appealed) shall be final and binding on all members.

## **16 DISSOLUTION CLAUSE**

- 16.1 The Council may resolve that the Women's Rights Party be dissolved as from the date to be named in the resolution, and may also by such resolution direct the method of disposing of the assets and property of the Women's Rights Party after the Party's contractual obligations are met and the Party is dissolved. The distribution of any remaining assets of the Party must be for causes that align with the Party's purposes.
- 16.2 Upon the resolution being confirmed at a subsequent Special Conference called for the purpose and held not earlier than 30 days after the date on which the first resolution was passed, the Women's Rights Party shall be dissolved. A notice of the resolution and its confirmation shall be sent to the Electoral Commission and the Commissioner of Inland Revenue.

## **APPENDIX 1 FINANCE AND CONTRACTING RULES**

### **1. Application**

These Rules apply to–

- (a) the Women’s Rights Party Council, regional organising groups, local groups, and any or all other organisations established by or under the auspices of any part of the Women’s Rights Party (hereby referred to as “Constituent Organisations”);
- (b) the campaign funds of any candidate selected to contest any election on behalf of the Women’s Rights Party:

### **2. Guidelines**

- 2.1 Treasurers, Women’s Rights Party officers and Constituent Organisations are required to follow the guidelines on finance and financial reporting as approved and issued by the Council from time to time. Any organisations may only manage Party funds or incur liabilities on behalf of the Women’s Rights Party if, before the commencement of each financial year, or before managing Women’s Rights Party funds or incurring liabilities, they have the express authorisation of the Council.
- 2.2 Such authorisation may be withdrawn by the Council where an organisation fails to meet its requirements as set out in the financial guidelines.

### **3. Express authority required to bind the Women’s Rights Party**

- 3.1 Each person or constituent body to whom this Schedule applies has the authority to enter into contracts in the name of the Women’s Rights Party, provided that:
  - (a) the contract is for the purpose of a Women’s Rights Party activity; and
  - (b) the cost to the Women’s Rights Party of the contract is no more than that organisation has available in its bank account at the time it enters into the contract.
- 3.2 Except where prior Council approval has been obtained, if any person or constituent organisation enters into a contract in the name of the Women’s Rights Party whose cost is more than the amount available in its bank account at the time the contract is executed, that person or organisation is treated as unfinancial and is not permitted to take part in the affairs of the Women’s Rights Party unless:
  - (a) the Council decides otherwise; and
  - (b) that person or organisation has fulfilled any conditions the Council imposes (including repayment of any relevant amount).

### **4. Guidelines and content**

- 4.1 The financial guidelines set out the criteria and process used by the Council to grant authorisation.
- 4.2 All organisations without such an authorisation must enter into an arrangement with an authorised organisation for the purposes of meeting their financial reporting and operating requirements as set out in the financial guidelines.

- 5. Deposit and accounting of funds**

The funds of the persons and organisations referred to in clause 1 above must be deposited in an account owned and maintained by the Women's Rights Party in the name of that organisation.
- 6. Making of payments**

Payments must be made on the instruction of the persons authorised by an appropriate minute in the records of the Party organisation concerned.
- 7. Current accounts**

Only sufficient funds to meet the running expenses of the organisation concerned must be retained in current accounts.
- 8. Financial year**

The Financial Year of the Party and all its constituent bodies commences on 1 January in each year and terminates on 31 December in that same year.
- 9. Duties at end of financial year**

At the end of each financial year the Secretary-Treasurer of each organisation must prepare a Statement of Receipts and Payments and Balance Sheet on the prescribed form supplied by the Council.
- 10. Duties of Constituent Organisations**

Any constituent organisation of the Women's Rights Party which has authority of the Council to manage funds must, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year, forward to the Council:

  - (a) A Statement of Receipts and Payments and Balance Sheet accepted by the Annual Meeting of the constituent organisation; and
  - (b) A copy of the financial statements under its jurisdiction.
- 11. Authorisation of persons canvassing for funds**

Where necessary, persons canvassing for funds for the Party must be provided with a written authorisation.
- 12. Restrictions on canvassing**

No constituent organisation may canvass for funds outside its own area unless authorised by the Council.
- 13. Restrictions on fundraising**

No constituent organisation shall initiate a fundraising lottery, raffle or other activity which has a major first prize of five hundred dollars (\$500) or more without the permission of the Council.
- 14. Restrictions on grants or loans**

Grants or loans to any organisation not affiliated with the Women's Rights Party must not be made without the prior consent of the Council.
- 15. Restrictions on borrowing money**

A person or organisation listed in clause 1 may only borrow money with the prior agreement of Council, which may set any conditions it sees fit.

**16. Controls on financial appeals**

All financial appeals for national or international objectives shall be controlled by the Council.

**17. Restrictions on deriving personal benefits**

17.1 No member may derive any pecuniary gain from the property or operations of the Women's Rights Party except for services rendered or supplies made.

17.2 No member of the Women's Rights Party or any person associated with a member may participate in or materially influence any decision made by the Party in respect of the payment to or on behalf of that member or associated person of any income, benefit, or advantage whatsoever.

17.3 Any such income paid must be reasonable and relative to that which would be paid in an arms-length transaction (being the open market value).

17.4 No Women's Rights Party organisation or entity may engage in any operations that would lead to any member deriving pecuniary gains, except as provided in clause 17.1.

17.5 The provisions and effect of this clause and clause 18 (a) cannot be removed from this document, and will be included and implied into any document replacing this Women's Rights Party Constitution.

**18. Winding up of Women's Rights Party**

In the event of the Women's Rights Party being wound-up:

(a) no member of the Women's Rights Party is personally entitled to participate or benefit in any way in the distribution of any assets of the Women's Rights Party both real and personal; and

(b) Women's Rights Party Council, at its discretion, must distribute any remaining assets to either:

(i) another political party with similar aims and objectives; or

(ii) a charity.

**19. Auditing Women's Rights Party organisations**

~~19.1 As soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and before 30 September of each year, the National Secretary must arrange for the Party's financial accounts to be audited.~~

~~19.2 The auditor's report on the annual financial statement of the Women's Rights Party must be presented to the Annual Conference.~~

***The Council will appoint a suitably qualified person who meets the criteria under the Electoral Act as the Party's auditor to audit the Party's accounts and returns to the extent required by the Electoral Act.***