

Rautaki Māori

2025–2030



New Zealand
Law Society
Te Kāhui Ture o Aotearoa



Kupu whakataki—Introduction

Our Rautaki Māori (Māori Strategy) articulates our commitment to honouring the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand and meeting the current and future needs of our legal profession. This includes meeting our obligations as a modern regulator and representative body by reflecting Māori cultural values, equity and inclusion, and recognising the unique and enduring constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

It sets out a practical pathway for the New Zealand Law Society Te Kāhui Ture o Aotearoa New Zealand (the Law Society) to meet that commitment as we develop our organisation, enhance our regulatory impact, and bring value to our profession and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our Rautaki Māori represents the collective voice of the Law Society and has been developed alongside our partners. As a kaitiaki for an exemplary legal profession in Aotearoa New Zealand, we will be guided by our values of kaitiakitanga—tāria te wā, manaakitanga, and pono to ensure that both we and the legal profession reflect the communities that we serve. Our journey is only beginning, and our path will shift over time as we progress and mature.

Guided by our values, we will be steadfast in our role. Inspired by the next generation, we will be courageous and honest.

Mauri ora!

Frazer Barton

President

Katie Rusbatch

Chief Executive Officer



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01

Tō mātou wero

Our challenge:

To meet our challenge, we will be ambitious in following our vision, and practical in how we work to achieve it.

The Law Society is embarking on a new journey to embed te ao Māori into our organisation to strengthen it, support our profession and our communities.

In doing so, we recognise the diversity of perspectives among our legal profession, and we will engage with the profession to hear their views as we move forward together on this journey.

There are several reasons we are starting this journey:

- Shifts in societal views towards more emphasis on equity, inclusion, and the application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi have important implications for our role as a pillar institution in New Zealand's legal system.

- We know our people want to be more culturally competent and confident in te ao Māori, particularly in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.
- The nature and the make-up of the legal workforce is changing, and we need to provide leadership for the legal profession and wider sector in the face of expectations of a strong place for te ao Māori perspectives.

Against this changing backdrop, we need to navigate the range of views and needs of our members while addressing the challenges confronting the profession, as identified in the Independent Review Report (2023).

We need to be more relevant for practising roia Māori (Māori lawyers), in ways that reflect Māori values and realities. We also need to increase our value to the legal profession, our membership and improve experiences for Māori, for our partners and stakeholders, and for consumers of legal services.

To address these challenges, we must have a clear and strong voice on important matters, especially Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the constitution of Aotearoa New Zealand. We need to be clear about how we apply te ao Māori in performing our powers and functions and in governing our own organisation.

02 Ki mua, mā muri *Walking backwards into the future*

The current context for this Rautaki Māori includes a complex mix of evolving legal practice, shifting societal expectations about our system of law, and the unique and enduring constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This strategy will equip us to respond effectively to this context.

Our Rautaki Māori is directly aligned with our Strategic Plan 2023–2026, which calls for increasing organisational capability in te ao Māori and aspires to having a bicultural perspective across our work. In addition, our Rautaki Māori aligns with our regulatory strategy—*Navigating into the Future 2022–2025*—which includes the objective to make our regulatory approach more responsive to Māori.

Supporting rōia Māori

We recognise the experience of rōia Māori in a system that has not necessarily met their needs, and we acknowledge initiatives, such as Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa, that have arisen in response to those limitations.

We know rōia Māori face complex demands, often being called on to help advance Māori collective kaupapa (purposes) and to mentor new Māori lawyers. As well as helping us better meet the needs of our rōia Māori, this strategy will help us provide leadership to the profession in supporting increased representation of Māori among the legal profession, the judiciary, and our regulatory work.

Supporting and protecting Māori consumers

This strategy will also help us build trust and confidence among Māori consumers of legal services in the protections and systems available to them (such as the complaints system), and in our role as a regulator. We know there continues to be some mistrust of institutions and information in Aotearoa New Zealand, including among Māori, and this strategy will support us to build trust in the legal profession and help us fulfil our regulatory functions.

Recognising the unique and enduring

In the changing political environment, the application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori rights is being debated. In this context the Law

02 Ki mua, mā muri *Walking backwards into the future*

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Recognising the unique and enduring constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

In the changing political environment, the application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori rights is being debated. In this context the Law Society has an important role to play in upholding good process and supporting the development of good law. Our Rautaki Māori recognises the unique and enduring constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in that work.

Providing leadership in a different, dynamic future

We know the future for the Law Society will look very different from the past, including a growing, youthful Māori population and a more diverse tauwiwi (non-Māori) population. Future law students and graduates will be more knowledgeable about tikanga Māori, te reo Māori, and Māori cultural values. The New Zealand Law Student Association survey found 78% of students consider te ao Māori and tikanga plays an important role in their degree (2025). Our Rautaki Māori will help us provide strong leadership within the profession and the legal sector in this evolving landscape.



03

Building a pathway toward our vision

Tō mātou wero —Our challenge

The Law Society is embarking on a new journey to embed te ao Māori into our organisation, to strengthen it, support our profession and our communities.

Ō mātou uara —Our values

We will be guided by our values to ensure that both we and the legal profession reflect the communities that we serve. We will be steadfast in our role.

Ō mātou whāinga —Our goals

Our goals look towards a five-year horizon (2025-2030).



Snapshot: Māori in New Zealand

Our changing population means the make up of the future workforce and consumers will change too. As of December 2024, Māori made up approximately 17.4% of New Zealand's total population.* The Māori population is relatively more youthful—one in five New Zealanders are Māori and almost one in three New Zealanders under 25 are Māori. This means the future face of the workforce and consumers is changing.

Nearly a quarter of Māori live in the Auckland region, followed by Waikato and the Bay of Plenty. Gisborne, Northland, and the Bay of Plenty have proportionally the highest Māori populations. The regional distribution of the Māori population is important to understand, as is the Māori land and economic asset base.

*Estimate as at 31 December 2024, Stats NZ
(Census 2023, Stats NZ)

17.4%

of New Zealand's population
is of Māori descent

23.3%

Nearly a quarter of
Māori live in the
Auckland region

Northland, Bay of
Plenty, and Gisborne
have proportionally
the highest Māori
populations

922,800
Māori



One in five New Zealanders
are of Māori descent.



Almost one in three
New Zealanders under 25
are of Māori descent.



17,506

Lawyers in Aotearoa
New Zealand holding a
Practising Certificate (PC)

7.8%

of all lawyers with a PC
are of Māori descent
(1,365)

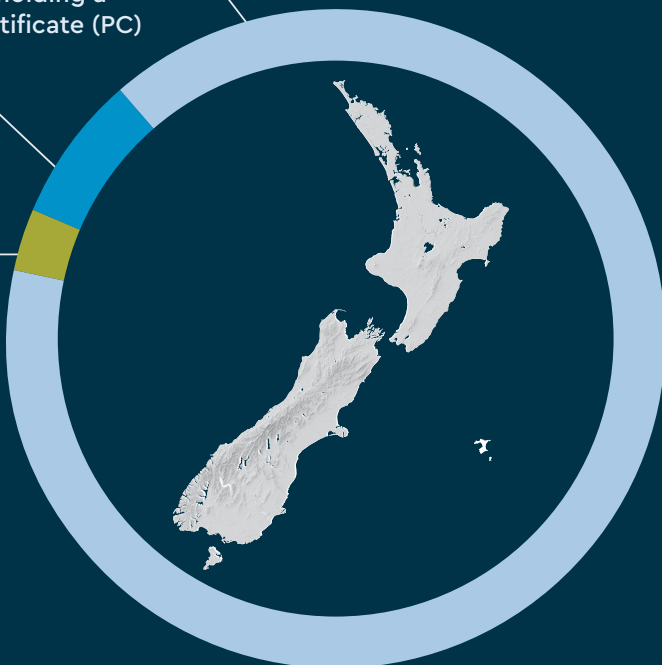
602

Māori lawyers fall within
the 0-7 years Post-Qualifi-
cation Experience (PQE)
cohort (10.4% of total PQE
cohort and 44.1% of Māori
lawyers with PC)

1

Proportionally,
there is 1 Māori
lawyer to every
676 persons of
Māori descent

676*



*Estimate population data as at 31 December 2024,
Stats NZ. Law Society registry data as at 30 June 2025.

Snapshot: Rōia Māori

Of the 17,506 lawyers based in Aotearoa New Zealand, 7.8% are of Māori descent, and 44.1% of Māori lawyers are 0-7 years PQE. This means more work is needed to increase the number of practising Māori lawyers and retaining them long-term.

Approximately 7%¹ of students enrolled for the 2024 Professional Legal Studies Course, which is a prerequisite for admission to practise, identified as Māori. In 2025, 13% of students in Bachelor of Laws programmes were Māori.² (noting that only about half will go on to practise law).

1. Based on third party information
2. NZLSA Education & Wellbeing report 2025



04

Ō mātou uara e arahi ana i a mātou *Our values guide us*

We will be guided by our values to ensure that both we and the legal profession reflect the communities that we serve. We will be steadfast in our role.

Kaitiakitanga

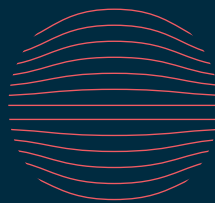
—tāria te wā



- We support the profession and consumers—responsively and effectively
- we nurture and embed best practice
- we think forward and progressively.

We act purposefully to uphold the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the constitution of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the rule of law. As a kaitiaki of the legal profession, we are a voice on matters of importance to Māori and all of Aotearoa.

Pono

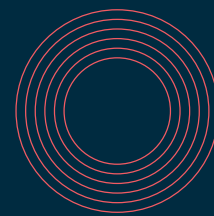


- We have a spirit of generosity and respect for all
- we work well together and with all parties
- we listen well.

'Pono ki te kaupapa'—we are steadfast and stay true to our purpose and values.

We build trust and confidence in our organisation as a regulator, and we are a trusted voice of the legal profession.

Manaakitanga



- We do what's right
- we do what we say we will
- we own what we do
- we stand strong when needed
- we are always trustworthy.

Our relationships and connections are important to us, and we look for opportunities to work alongside our Māori partners to address challenges and deliver value.



05 Ō mātou whāinga Our goals

WHĀINGA TUATAHI

GOAL 1

We want to be recognised as a strong and effective voice for equitable access to justice and the rule of law, including through recognising the unique and enduring constitutional significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so that we help inform the development of good law in Aotearoa New Zealand.

WHĀINGA TUARUA

GOAL 2

We want Māori consumers of legal services to have confidence in our role as a kaitiaki and regulator of an exemplary legal profession in Aotearoa New Zealand and to have access to legal services that recognise tikanga and Māori values. Our regulatory approach will be recognised for its cultural responsiveness.

WHĀINGA TUATORU

GOAL 3

We want our organisation, our people, and the legal profession to be future-ready, and feel supported and empowered on their respective te ao Māori learning journeys through ongoing education and development.

WHĀINGA TUAWHĀ

GOAL 4

We want rōia Māori, their networks, and organisations to feel supported by the Law Society in ways that are meaningful to them.

06 Te Whakatutuki Action Plan

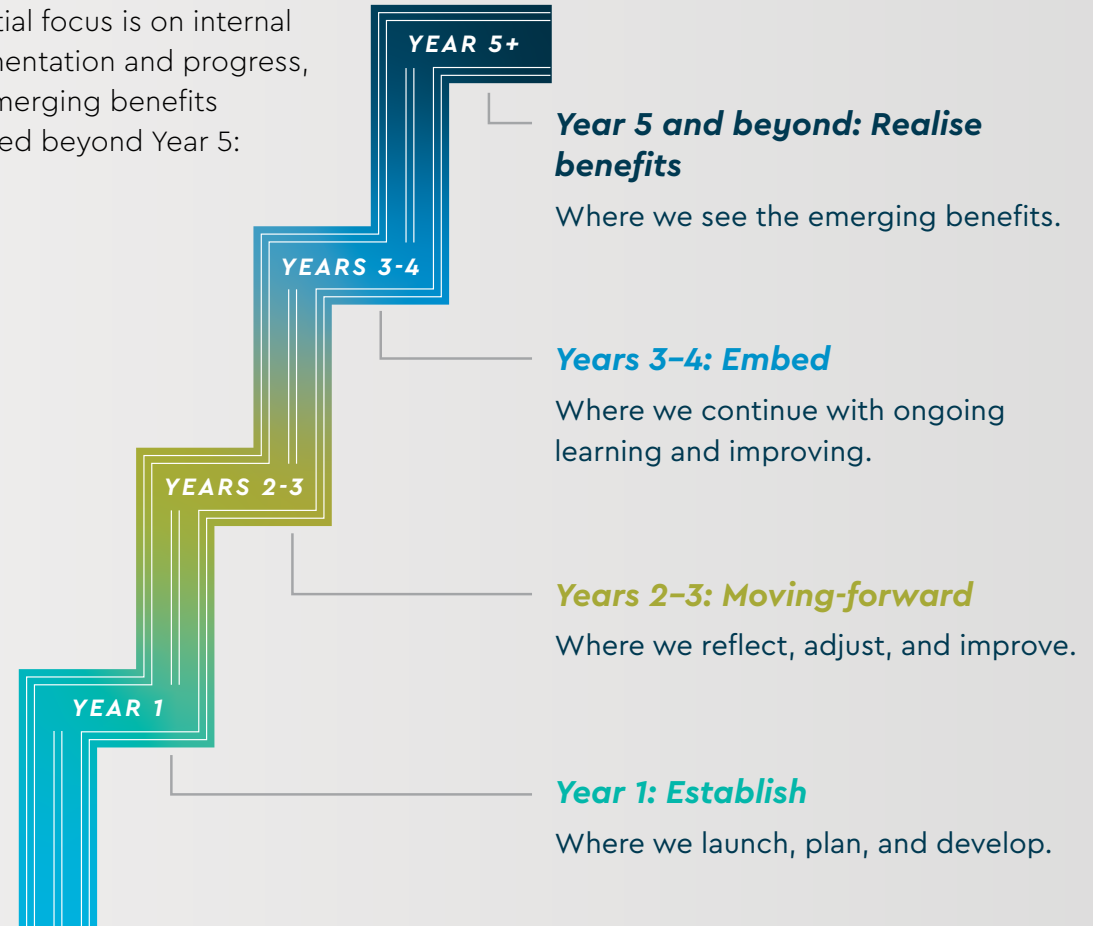
We will take a considered, practical approach to implementing this strategy, through meaningful activities that empower our staff and allow us to grow and mature over time. As we are only just beginning our journey, we will start with small steps as we build our confidence together.



This section explains how we will achieve our goals and measure our progress.

We have aligned the most relevant whāinga (goals) to each area of Te Whakatutuki (action plan).

The initial focus is on internal implementation and progress, with emerging benefits expected beyond Year 5:



Glossary

Te reo Māori terms used throughout this Strategy:

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
Hononga	Union, connection, relationship, bond
Ka mua, ka muri	Walking backwards into the future
Kaitiaki	Custodian, guardian, caregiver, keeper, steward
Kaitiakitanga —tāria te wā	Guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship, trustee—think forward progressively
Kaupapa	Topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose
Mahi	Work, action
Mana	Prestige, influence, authority, control, power, status, spiritual power, charisma
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, kindness, generosity, support
Māori partners	Includes whānau/hapū/iwi, Te Hunga Roia Māori o Aotearoa, and Roia Māori who are members of The Law Society

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Mātou	We (not inclusive of you)
Pakaha Rautaki	Strategic lever
Pono	Be true, steadfast, honest, genuine, sincere
Rautaki Māori	Māori strategy
Rōia Māori	Māori lawyer
Tangata	People
Tāria te wā	by and by, after a time, after a while, later, in time, eventually
Tauiri	Non-Māori
Te ao Māori	The Māori world/worldview

(Tihei) Mauri ora!	Sneeze of life, call to claim the right to speak
Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa	The Māori Law Society
Te huarahi	Roadmap
Te Kāhui Ture O Aotearoa	The New Zealand Law Society
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Whakatutuki	Action Plan
Tūtohu	Indicator
Uara	Value
Wero	Challenge
Whāinga	Goal, objective, purpose, outcome

Rautaki Māori

2025–2030