

New Zealand Improves First Action Plan but Doesn't Tackle Core Open Government Issues, New Report Suggests

Open Government Partnership Releases Mid-Term Progress Report on New Zealand's Open Government Efforts

26 March 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND – Today, [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#) - a partnership of 75 governments and hundreds of civil society organisations working to make government more accountable to their citizens - released its mid-term [Progress Report on New Zealand's OGP National Action Plan 2016-2018](#). Findings suggest that although New Zealand's second two-year action plan is better than the first, it is not tackling New Zealand's big open government issues.

"This plan has good open government actions", said Keitha Booth, New Zealand researcher for OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM). "But they are top-down, discrete activities and do not address major concerns raised by the public since NZ joined OGP in 2013. While there is improved access to information and processes for better application of the Official Information Act, overall the plan has not made the courageous steps towards the openness and transparency that many New Zealanders want".

The report finds fault with the way the plan was prepared. "Though engagement this time was better, the timeline for public involvement was short and the technology did not work for everyone", said Booth. "It was difficult for civil society organisations to submit their priorities online. The government did not attract members of the public beyond people already engaged. The way it was done continues to fall short of the level of public collaboration that the government promised when it signed up to OGP".

The report gives top marks to the expansion of NZ's [legislation website](#), and praises work to open the budget, use better Official Information Act practices, track open government data release and set up ongoing public engagement. It also notes plans to adopt the Open Data Charter and work on improved policy practices. But overall New Zealand's plan does not show a long-term commitment toward the significant open government reforms which advance transparency, public accountability and citizen participation.

The report sees a singular opportunity to develop the next action plan in the first year of the new Coalition Government and to pursue open government issues identified by external stakeholders, including politicians. Booth recommends that the government and civil society work together on gaining meaningful reform in areas such as whistleblower protection, a public register of company beneficial ownership, reforming the Official Information Act and introducing citizenship education to increase the public's participation in government.

Booth will be discussing the report on Monday 26 March at the Community Hub Meeting Room, Level 4, 120 Featherston Street, Wellington, at 12:00 PM with [Anaru Fraser](#), HuiE Community Aotearoa; [Ronja Levers](#), United Nations Association of New Zealand; [Suzanne Snively](#), Transparency International New Zealand and [Catherine Williams](#), Deputy Commissioner, Integrity, Ethics and Standards, State Services Commission. Members of the public are encouraged to come along.

For more information, contact:

Keitha Booth, IRM researcher for New Zealand
+64 0274 454 616

About OGP

OGP is a unique multilateral initiative aimed at securing concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, increase civic participation, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to make governments more open, effective, and accountable to citizens around the world.

OGP was formally launched in September 2011 when eight founding governments – Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States – endorsed an Open Government Declaration, and published OGP National Action Plans with specific open government reform commitments. In just six and a half years OGP has grown to include over 70 governments, 15 sub-nationals, seven multilaterals and hundreds of civil society organizations. New Zealand joined in 2013.