



**Te Mana Ārai o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Customs Service

# **Mahi Whanonga**

## **Code of Conduct**

*He waka  
eke noa*

*We are all in  
this together*

*This Māori whakataukī / proverb refers to:  
People are united in their singlemindedness  
in achieving their goal together as one.*

# Why we have a Customs' Code of Conduct

At Customs, you join a family, a whānau, not just an organisation.

We work closely together to protect and promote New Zealand across borders. This requires trust in one another and responsibility for the work we do. That means we all need to be clear on the standards of behaviour expected of us in Customs.

Our Code of Conduct has been written to help you understand these standards and guide you in your decision-making.

It builds on our Te Pou Tokomanawa, the foundation of what we do as reflected in the following principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi:



**KOTAHITANGA**

Partnership



**KAITIAKITANGA**

Protection



**MANAAKITANGA**

Participation

It promotes our values and helps maintain a positive and safe work environment.



**Te ara tika**  
We do what's right



**Kaitiakitanga**  
We are guardians



**He tāngata**  
We value people



**Pae tawhiti**  
We look forward

It ensures we uphold the trust of the public and government.

# Why we have a Customs' Code of Conduct

## We're all responsible

As a family, a whānau, we are responsible for each other and ourselves. Our Code of Conduct guides us in how we can do that. It applies to everyone working for Customs, in New Zealand and offshore, including employees seconded from other agencies, contractors and consultants.

The Code of Conduct forms part of the terms and conditions of employment with Customs. It's consistent with relevant legislation and the expectations of the [Public Service Act 2020](#).

Our Code of Conduct applies at all times you are at work whether you are in the office, on duty at the front line or working from home, or representing Customs at events, e.g. a sporting event, a kapa haka occasion, an awards dinner, etc.

Even outside work, it's important to consider the impact of your decisions or behaviour, including on-line and on social media.

We all have a responsibility to uphold the behaviour and conduct described in our Code. This will help Customs be a great place to work where everyone feels secure, safe and included.

## What are we responsible for?

We are responsible for the [Public Service Standards of Integrity and Conduct](#) as well as the five public service values as outlined in the Public Service Act 2020.

We must be:

- 1. Impartial:** treat all people fairly, without personal favour or bias.
- 2. Responsive:** understand and meet people's needs and aspirations.
- 3. Accountable:** take responsibility and answer for our work, actions, and decisions.
- 4. Trustworthy:** act with integrity and are open and transparent.
- 5. Respectful:** treat all people with dignity and compassion and act with humility.

Each of these values have **standards of behaviour** that are a requirement of all public servants. These standards have been explained in a Customs' context.

Once you've read these standards and signed the **Customs' Code of Conduct**, it is mandatory to complete the [Code of Conduct eLearning module](#) in the Learning Room within two weeks of joining Customs.



# Ngā Taumata Whanonga | Standards of Behaviour

A summary of our standards is provided below. You can click on the link provided in each heading for more detailed explanations and examples.

## Ngākau Tapatahi / Impartial

### Āta Whakarongo / Responsive

Work in partnership with Māori for the mutual benefit of all involved.

We are responsive to the different needs of our colleagues and people we come into contact with.

Consider each other's needs, both at work and outside of work, and support work/life balance.

Create a work environment free from discrimination, harassment and unsafe conditions.

Recognise and value the strengths and accomplishments of others.

Build and maintain positive work relationships with colleagues, stakeholders, customers, and external parties motivated by a shared purpose.

Contribute positively and professionally to Customs, our stakeholders and customers to improve efficiency and enable quality outcomes.

### Ngākau Pono / Trustworthy

Remain politically neutral no matter who is in government.

Not allow our personal beliefs to affect how we carry out our work in Customs.

Be unbiased in our advice and the way we treat people at all times.

Prevent bias by role modelling desired behaviours and constructively addressing bias.

### Whakarangatira / Respectful

Actively support equitable participation of all employees in Customs.

Be inclusive and actively listen to what others have to say, ensuring every voice is valued and respected.

Value diversity of perspectives and avoid judging others.

Treat people with care and respect, no matter what their age, ethnicity, religion, ethical beliefs, disability, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or family responsibilities.

Create a positive and safe work environment that encourages us to work together to achieve our goals.

## Whaiwhakaaro / Accountable

Take responsibility for our work, decisions and actions.

Avoid any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest or preferential treatment.

Only use our business tools and resources for their intended purpose.

Ensure information sharing is authorised and appropriate in all circumstances.

As a general rule, refuse any gift offered to us as part of working for Customs.

Act with integrity, be honest and transparent.

Do our best work possible.

Ensure our decisions and actions are not affected by our personal interests and relationships nor used for personal gain.

Create a supportive and safe work environment where everyone feels safe to speak up.

Ensure our actions and behaviour, at work and outside work, does not harm the reputation of Customs and the wider public service.

Deliver on our statutory obligations through our governance, processes, controls and risk management.

Maintain the integrity of Customs in the way we work and interact with others.

Meet the expectations of government and the public.

# Making the right choices

Our Code of Conduct clearly describes key expectations for our standards of behaviour.

## Making right choices

Our Code of Conduct clearly describes key expectations for our standards of behaviour. It provides practical descriptions of these as well as examples and tools to help you make the right choices. However, there will be situations where it won't be clear what to do. In these circumstances, you need to:

- Respect Customs' values.
- Uphold Customs' reputation.
- Apply sound judgement and common sense.
- Act with honour for yourself and others.

You can use the following questions to help you decide whether your intended decision or action will be appropriate.

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**Naku te rourou nau te rourou  
ka ora ai te iwi.**

**With your basket and my  
basket the people will live.**

*This well-known Māori whakatauki / proverb speaks about each individual contribution being of value to the collective success of the entire community.*

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## Use the following as a guide:

**Te ara tika**  
We do what's right

Would your decision or action reflect integrity and honesty?

**Kaitiakitanga**  
We are guardians

Would your decision or action protect New Zealand across borders?

**He tāngata**  
We value people

Would your decision or action demonstrate care and respect for others?

**Pae tawhiti**  
We look forward

How would your decision or action impact our reputation and public trust in Customs?

If you're still uncertain about what the right thing is to do, speak to your manager and/or People & Capability for clarification.



# Breaches and potential consequences

The information below does not cover all scenarios. The examples provided act as a guide.

Most people behave ethically and meet the expectations outlined in our Code of Conduct. However, there may be times where a breach will occur.

A breach may result in an investigation and disciplinary action. Each case will be considered individually, and an unbiased and fair process will be applied.

The action taken will depend on the severity of the breach. It can range from a verbal warning for misconduct to dismissal for serious misconduct. In cases where the law has been broken, such as fraud, undertaking corrupt practices or use of illegal drugs, the situation will be referred to the appropriate authority who may proceed with prosecution.

[The People & Capability Policy](#): Disciplinary provides more details of Customs' process and examples.

## Examples of misconduct

- Using inappropriate language
- Internet misuse
- Minor instances of failing to follow an employer's reasonable and lawful instruction
- Breaches of the employment agreement, e.g. unauthorised absence
- Repeated lateness

## Examples of serious misconduct

- Violent behaviour
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Theft or fraud
- Unauthorised disclosure of classified information
- Behaviour that endangers the health and safety of the employee or others
- Use of illegal drugs
- Dishonesty

## Misconduct outside work

Misconduct outside work could lead to disciplinary action or dismissal if:

- The conduct is unlawful, or
- The conduct damaged the relationship of trust and confidence between the employee and Customs, or
- The conduct brought Customs into disrepute, or
- The conduct is not appropriate for the employee to be doing their job properly.

## Please speak up

We're all responsible for reporting misconduct or wrong doing.

If you genuinely believe someone is breaching our Code of Conduct or is acting unethically, it's important you raise your concerns. Please speak to your manager or People & Capability.

They will support you and talk through what can be done. Alternatively, you can send an email to [Integrity@customs.govt.nz](mailto:Integrity@customs.govt.nz) or anonymously phone 24/7 the Customs' Integrity Line on **0800 835 269**.

# Helping you make the right choices

The explanations below do not cover every scenario that might apply under each of these standards of behaviour. The intention is to provide a guide for the expectations in each of these areas.

**Ngākau Tapatahi / Impartial:**  
to treat all people fairly, without personal favour or bias.

## Be politically neutral

- Remain impartial and perform our role in a politically neutral way at all times.
- Ensure no comments, decisions or actions undermine the government of the day nor future governments.
- Do not allow any political preferences or intent to interfere with our employment responsibilities and expectations.

## Stay unaffected by your personal beliefs

- Do not allow personal beliefs and activities to compromise or negatively influence our work, including undermining the confidence others may have in us to fulfil our responsibilities.
- Follow all reasonable instructions relating to our employment, including from our manager, operational procedures and operational policies.

## Remain unbiased

- Be objective and professional in our decision-making as well as in our advice and recommendations to others, both verbal and written.
- Consider the needs of others and treat them fairly, transparently and professionally without bias or favouritism.
- If we see bias, we can use the [Safe to Speak Up tips and tools](#) for guidance or discuss the matter with our manager, People & Capability or email [Integrity@customs.govt.nz](mailto:Integrity@customs.govt.nz)

**Āta Whakarongo / Responsive:**  
to understand and meet people's needs and aspirations.

## Value people

- We acknowledge and value all people for their abilities, qualities and achievements.
- We take collective responsibility for our teams' and our own health and safety, wellbeing and performance. We are reasonable in our expectations of each other and ourselves.

## Maintain a safe work environment

- We role model the expected standards of conduct and follow the relevant policies and procedures to ensure our work environment is free from discrimination, harassment and unsafe conditions.
- We prevent discrimination, harassment and unsafe conditions by raising issues or concerns constructively and discreetly with our manager, People & Capability or email [Integrity@customs.govt.nz](mailto:Integrity@customs.govt.nz).
- We work together to establish, maintain and improve quality services and high standards of responsiveness to our stakeholders and customers.
- We interact positively with others in a way that preserves and enhances our own integrity and the integrity of others.

# Helping you make the right choices

The explanations below do not cover every scenario that might apply under each of these standards of behaviour. The intention is to provide a guide for the expectations in each of these areas.

## Whaiwhakaaro / Accountable: to take responsibility and answer for our work, actions, and decisions.

### Maintain integrity

- Maintain the integrity of Customs in the way we work and interact with others.
- Ensure the integrity of Customs' people, information, systems and processes is maintained. We must not use any knowledge gained through our role at Customs for our own or anyone else's advantage or disadvantage. Any sharing of information must be authorised and appropriate in all circumstances, and, in particular, in accordance with the provisions of the Customs and Excise Act 2018 (the Act). The [Information Sharing Accountability Framework](#) must be followed at all times.
- Understand and maintain our legal obligations relating to the [protection and release](#) of information, including protecting personal privacy, being discreet and applying appropriate security levels when discussing and disclosing information relating to the work we do.
- Always adhere to the [Privacy Act 2020](#) obligations and seek advice where we are unsure of what is expected or required. The information privacy principles set out in [section 22](#) of that Act are of particular relevance. Further information and tools on our information sharing and privacy responsibilities at Customs is available on the [Information Sharing and Privacy page](#).
- A privacy breach can occur in a range of circumstances, including where there is unauthorised or accidental access to, or disclosure, alteration, loss or destruction of the personal information. If a privacy breach is identified, we must notify our manager and follow the guidance provided in the [Information Sharing and Privacy page](#).
- Never remove, alter or destroy information that is officially recorded in our systems unless we are formally authorised to do so.

- Always use our skills, knowledge, experience and powers appropriately and honestly. This means never using them for our personal gain nor for the personal gain of others.
- Understand our [Declaration of Interest policy](#) and report any conflicts of interest to our manager as soon as they arise or where we become aware of them.
- Do not accept, directly or indirectly, any special consideration, treatment, or advantage beyond what is generally available as an employee of Customs.
- Do not use business tools and resources for personal use or for accessing inappropriate material. Always ensure its use is ethical, legal and responsible, and, that it does not compromise the reputation of Customs nor put at risk our people, information, property or finances. The [Use of Customs Systems and Devices](#) policy must be adhered to at all times.

### Fulfil your legal obligations

- Ensure the integrity and reputation of Customs is upheld by meeting our statutory requirements and complying with all legislation. This includes following our systems, processes and procedures to ensure we mitigate any risks or errors and maintain honesty at all times.
- Act within our powers and delegated authority, including in our application of legislation, decision-making, expenditure and formal approvals.
- Understand the expectations of the government of the day and work together to meet them to the highest standard possible.
- Maintain public trust through our decisions and actions. This includes alerting management of any unlawful activities as well as co-operating with any investigations regarding breaches of our standards and legal requirements.



# Helping you make the right choices

The explanations below do not cover every scenario that might apply under each of these standards of behaviour. The intention is to provide a guide for the expectations in each of these areas.

## Ngākau Pono / Trustworthy: to act with integrity and be open and transparent.

### Treat everyone fairly and honestly

- Ensure that our actions do not improperly benefit, or give preferential treatment to, family, friends, groups in which we have a personal interest, and people we're connected with in any way.
- As a general rule, we must refuse any gift offered to us as part of working for Customs. It could put us at risk of being obligated to return a favour, provide preferential treatment or be perceived to be doing this. There may be some exceptions, such as the exchange of gifts as part of cultural traditions or between employees for recognition of service or performance or to mark a significant occasion such as a farewell or retirement. For details of what is acceptable, refer to the [Gifts and Hospitality policy](#).
- We do not bully, harass or intimidate anyone or discriminate against anyone. Should we see or experience such behaviour, we must take appropriate action as outlined in the [Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy](#).

### Build and maintain trust

- Build and maintain trust so people feel supported and safe to speak up. The [Safe to Speak Up tips and tools](#) provide guidance and help with this. If we see something of concern, we should discuss the matter with our manager, People & Capability or email [Integrity@customs.govt.nz](mailto:Integrity@customs.govt.nz)
- Act with honesty at all times by being truthful and transparent regarding our decisions and actions. This includes outside work if our actions may be seen as dishonest and impacting on the trust or confidence that the public, Public Service or Government may have in Customs.

- Should a mistake be made or issue arise because of our decisions or actions, we will quickly acknowledge there's a problem, identify our role in it, and work with others to resolve it and prevent it from happening again.

### Maintain professional and high standards

- Complete our duties and responsibilities to the expected standard and level of performance agreed to in our employment contract. This includes meeting the expected standard of performance detailed in your Performance Review and Development (PRD) document and working the agreed hours of work.
- Keep accurate and readily accessible records of our decisions and actions in order to promote public understanding and to maintain community confidence.
- Endeavour to improve the quality and effectiveness of our work and in doing so support others within and across organisations to share knowledge and expertise. Use personal development opportunities to improve our performance and add value to Customs.
- Always be lawful and trustworthy in our actions and behaviours both at work and outside of work. We must conduct ourselves in a professional manner even when off duty and ensure our behaviour does not harm the reputation of Customs and the wider public service.

# Helping you make the right choices

The explanations below do not cover every scenario that might apply under each of these standards of behaviour. The intention is to provide a guide for the expectations in each of these areas.

## **Whakarangatira / Respectful:** to treat all people with dignity and compassion and act with humility.

### Work in partnership to achieve our goals

- Work towards creating an environment where everyone has a voice, is heard, and feels supported to participate. This includes respecting and allowing for the inclusion of Te Ao Māori.
- Give equal consideration to others. We communicate honestly and supportively, listen respectfully, and think and act constructively.
- Create a positive and safe work environment that encourages us to work together to achieve our goals.
- We work collaboratively and focus on finding solutions.
- Develop good relationships with our customers and stakeholders and help them access our services.

### Respect inclusion and diversity

- Treat people as we'd expect to be treated, with care and respect, no matter what their age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality or gender identity.
- Recognise and treasure cultural diversity. We are inclusive and actively listen to what others have to say, every voice is valued and respected.
- We value and consider the professional views, culture and beliefs, feelings, needs and efforts of others.





NEW ZEALAND  
**CUSTOMS SERVICE**  
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