The objective of the Bill is to facilitate the use of electronic technology and to contribute to the Government’s goal of growing an inclusive innovative economy for the benefit of all New Zealanders. It is intended to –

- Reduce compliance and transaction costs for business and the general public:
- Remove legislative impediments to dealing with government electronically:
- Promote consistency between New Zealand law and that of our major trading partners, particularly Australia:
- Promote the development of electronic commerce.

The Bill achieves this by –

- Reducing uncertainty regarding the legal effect of electronic information, and the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications:
- Allowing certain paper-based legal requirements, such as a requirement for writing, a signature, or the retention of documents, to be met by using electronic technology that is functionally equivalent to those paper-based legal requirements.

Where an enactment already permits the use of electronic technology, the Bill does not override any specific requirements with respect to that technology. In addition, the Bill excludes a number of enactments from its scope where it is considered that the use of electronic technology is inappropriate.
The Bill is facilitative only. No one is required to use electronic technology by virtue of this Bill.

The Bill is based on work carried out by the Law Commission and closely follows both the Model Law on Electronic Commerce prepared by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in 1996 and the Australian Electronic Transactions Act 1999 (Cth).

**Part by Part analysis**

The Bill (except the empowering provisions for making regulations) comes into force on a date to be appointed by the Governor-General by Order in Council. The empowering provisions for making regulations come into force on the day after the date on which the Bill receives the Royal assent. This will enable regulations that specify additional requirements, if any, to be made before the Bill comes into force.

**Part 1**

**Preliminary**

*Part 1* deals with the following matters:

- The purpose of the Bill:
- Overview of provisions:
- Interpretation:
- The Act binding the Crown.

The purpose of the Bill is to facilitate the use of electronic technology. This is achieved in 2 ways –

- Firstly, the Bill reduces uncertainty regarding the legal effect of electronic information, and the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications (*see Part 2*):

- Secondly, the Bill allows certain paper-based legal requirements, such as a requirement for writing, a signature, or the retention of documents, to be met by using functionally equivalent electronic technology (*see Part 3*).

The definition of *electronic* in *clause 5* is broad and includes technologies that are not strictly electronic.

The Bill technology neutral as it does not specify or favour particular technologies and applies equally to existing and new technologies.
Clause 6 provides that the UNCITRAL Model Law and any UNCITRAL document relating to the Model Law may be referred to in interpreting the Bill.

Part 2

Improving certainty in relation to electronic information and electronic communications

Part 2 reduces uncertainty regarding the legal effect of electronic information, and the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications.

Clause 8 confirms that information is not legally ineffective simply because it is –

- In electronic form or communicated by electronic means:
- Incorporated by reference in an electronic communication.

For example, clause 8 confirms that it is possible to enter into a contract using electronic communications if all other requirements for an enforceable contract are met.

Clauses 9 to 13 set out default rules regarding the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications. The rules –

- Can be overridden by agreement between the parties to an electronic communication:
- Do not apply to the extent that an enactment provides its own rules.

Part 3

Application of legal requirements to electronic transactions

Part 3 allows certain legal requirements to be met, subject to conditions specified in subpart 2, by using functionally equivalent electronic technology.

The legal requirements are as follows:

- That information be in writing:
- That information be recorded in writing:
- That information be given in writing:
- That information be signed:
- That a signature or seal be witnessed:
- That information (whether in paper or electronic form) be retained.
• That information (whether in paper or electronic form) be provided or produced to a person:

• That a person be required to provide access to information (whether or electronic form):

• That a document be compared with an original.

The Bill specifies the conditions that must be met to achieve functional equivalence. For example, an electronic communication is functionally equivalent to writing only if it is accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

The consent of certain persons must be given as a condition for meeting some legal requirements by using electronic technology.

Clause 14 provides that Part 3 is overarching legislation that applies to every enactment passed before or after the commencement of the Bill with the exception of —

• Enactments that require the use of specified electronic technology:

• Enactments specified, and provisions of enactments described, in the Schedule.
Hon Paul Swain

Electronic Transactions Bill

Government Bill

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The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:

1 Title
This Act is the Electronic Transactions Act 2000.

2 Commencement
(1) This Act (except sections 14 (3) and 35) comes into force on a date to be appointed by the Governor-General by Order in Council.

(2) Sections 14 (3) and 35 come into force on the day after the date on which the Act receives the Royal assent.

Part 1
Preliminary

3 Purpose
The purpose of this Act is to facilitate the use of electronic technology by-

a) reducing uncertainty regarding-
   i) the legal effect of information that is in electronic form or that is communicated by electronic means; and
   ii) the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications; and

b) providing that certain paper-based legal requirements may be met by using electronic technology that is functionally equivalent to those legal requirements.

4 Overview
In this Act,-

a) Matters concerning the legal effect of information that is in electronic form or that is communicated by electronic means are set out in section 8:
(b) default rules about the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications are set out in sections 9 to 13:
(c) key provisions concerning the use of electronic technology to meet certain legal requirements are set out in sections 14 to 17:
(d) provisions that specify certain legal requirements that may be met by using electronic technology, and how they may be met, are set out in sections 18 to 32.

5 Interpretation
In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-
data storage device means any article or device (for example, a disk) from which information is capable of being reproduced, with or without the aid of any other article or device
electronic includes electrical, digital, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, biometric and photonic
electronic communication means a communication by electronic means
information includes information (whether in its original form or otherwise) that is in the form of a document, a signature, a seal, data, text, images, sound, or speech
information system has the meaning set out in section 10 (2)
legal requirement has the meaning set out in section 15 (2)
transaction includes-
(a) a transaction of a non-commercial nature:
(b) a single communication:
(c) the outcome of multiple related communications.

6 Further provision relating to interpretation
In interpreting this Act, reference may be made to-
(a) the Model Law on Electronic Commerce adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on 16 December 1996:
(b) any document that relates to the Model Law that originates from the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, or its working group for the preparation of the Model Law.

7 Act binds the Crown
This Act binds the Crown.

Part 2
Improving certainty in relation to electronic information and electronic communications

Validity

8 Validity of information
To avoid doubt, information is not denied legal effect solely because it is-
(a) In electronic form or is communicated by electronic means:
(b) Referred to in an electronic communication that is intended to give rise to that legal effect.
Default rules about dispatch and receipt of electronic communications

9 When default rules in sections 10 to 13 apply
Sections 10 to 13 apply to an electronic communication except to the extent that-
(a) the parties to the communication otherwise agree:
(b) an enactment provides otherwise.

10 Time of dispatch
(1) An electronic communication is taken to be dispatched at the time the electronic communication first enters an information system outside the control of the originator.
(2) For the purposes of sections 10 and 11, information system means a system for producing, sending, receiving, storing, displaying, or otherwise processing electronic communications.

11 Time of receipt
An electronic communications is taken to be received,-
(a) in the case of an addressee who has designated an information system for the purpose of receiving electronic communications, at the time the electronic communication enters that information system; or
(b) in any other case, at the time the electronic communication comes to the attention of the addressee.

12 Place of dispatch
An electronic communication is taken to be dispatched from-
(a) the originator’s place of business; or
(b) if the originator has more than 1 place of business,-
   (i) the place of business that has the closest relationship with the underlying transaction; or
   (ii) if there is no place of business to which subparagraph (i) applies, the originator’s principal place of business; or
(c) in the case of an originator who does not have a place of business, the originator’s ordinary place of residence.

13 Place of receipt
An electronic communication is taken to be received at-
(a) the addressee’s place of business; or
(b) if the addressee has more than 1 place of business,-
   (i) the place of business that has the closest relationship with the underlying transaction; or
   (ii) if there is no place of business to which subparagraph (i) applies, the addressee’s principal place of business; or
(c) in the case of an addressee who does not have a place of business, the addressee’s ordinary place of residence.
Part 3  
Application of legal requirements to  
electronic transactions

Subpart 1- Preliminary

14  When Part applies
(1) Subject to subsection (2), this Part applies to every enactment that is part of the law of New Zealand and that is passed either before or after the commencement of this Act.

(2) This Part does not apply to-
(a) An enactment that requires information to be recorded, given, produced, or retained, or a signature to be given, or a signature or seal to be witnessed-
   (i) in accordance with particular electronic technology requirements; or
   (ii) on a particular kind of data storage device; or
   (iii) by means of a particular kind of electronic communications:
(b) the enactments specified in Part 1 of the Schedule:
(c) the provisions of enactments specified in column 2 of Part 2 of the Schedule:
(d) the provisions of enactments that are described in Part 3 of the Schedule:
(e) the provisions of the enactments that are described in Part 4 of the Schedule except to the extent that rules of a court, or guidelines issued with the authority of a court or tribunal, specified in that Part of the Schedule provide for the use of electronic technology in accordance with this Part.

(3) The Governor-General may, by Order in Council, amend the Schedule or repeal the Schedule and substitute a new schedule.

15  Satisfaction of legal requirements through use of electronic technology
(1) A legal requirement can be met using electronic technology if-
(a) the provisions in subpart 2 are satisfied; and
(b) any conditions prescribed by any regulations made under section 35 are satisfied.

(2) For the purpose of this Part, legal requirement-
(a) means a provision-
   (i) in an enactment to which this Part applies; and
   (ii) of a kind that is referred to in subpart 2; and
(b) includes a provision that imposes an obligation or that provides consequences depending on whether or not the provision is complied with.
16 Consent to use of electronic technology

(1) Nothing in this Part requires a person to use, provide, or accept information in an electronic form without that person’s consent.

(2) For the purposes of this Part,-
   (a) a person may consent to use, provide, or accept information in an electronic form subject to conditions regarding the form of the information or the means by which the information is produced, sent, received, processed, stored, or displayed:
   (b) consent may be inferred from a person’s conduct.

(3) Subsections (1) and (2(a) are for the avoidance of doubt.

17 When integrity of information maintained

For the purposes of this Part, the integrity of information is maintained only if the information has remained complete and unaltered, other than the addition of any endorsement, or any immaterial change, that arises in the normal course of communication, storage, or display.

Subpart 2 – Legal requirements

Writing

18 Requirement that information be in writing

A legal requirement that information be in writing is met by information that is in electronic form if the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

19 Requirement to record information in writing

A legal requirement that information be recorded in writing is met by recording the information in electronic form if the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

20 Requirement to give information in writing

(1) A legal requirement to give information in writing is met by giving the information in electronic form, whether by means of an electronic communication or otherwise, if –
   (a) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference; and
   (b) the person to whom the information is required to be given consents to the information being given in electronic form and by means of an electronic communication, if applicable.

(2) If subsection(1) applies, a legal requirement to provide multiple copies of the information to the same person at the same time is met by providing a single electronic version of the information.

(3) Subsection (1) applies to a legal requirement to give information even if that information is required to be given in a specified manner, for example by filing, sending, serving, delivering, lodging, or posting that information.

(4) A legal requirement to give information includes, for example, -
   (a) making an application:
   (b) making or lodging a claim:
   (c) giving, sending, or serving a notification:
   (d) lodging a return:
(e) making a request:
(f) making a declaration:
(g) lodging or issuing a certificate:
(h) making, varying, or cancelling an election:
(i) lodging an objection:
(j) giving a statement of reasons.

21 **Additional requirements relating to information in writing**
To avoid doubt, a legal requirement relating to the form or layout of, or the materials to be used for writing, information, or any similar requirement, need not be complied with in order to meet a legal requirement to which any of sections 18 to 20 apply.

**Signatures**

22 **Requirement for signature**
(1) Subject to subsection (2), a legal requirement for a signature other than a witness’ signature is met by means of an electronic signature if the electronic signature –
   (a) adequately identifies the signatory and adequately indicates the signatory’s approval of the information to which the signature relates; and
   (b) is as reliable as is appropriate given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, the signature is required.

(2) A legal requirement for a signature is not met by means of an electronic signature unless, in the case of a signature on information that is required to be given to a person, that person consents to receiving the electronic signature.

23 **Requirement that signature or seal be witnessed**
(1) Subject to subsection (2), a legal requirement for a signature or a seal to be witnessed is met by means of a witness’ electronic signature, if-
   (a) in the case of the witnessing of a signature, the signature is an electronic signature that complies with section 22; and
   (b) in the case of the witnessing of a signature or a seal, the electronic signature of the witness –
      (i) adequately identifies the witness and adequately indicates that the signature or seal has been witnessed; and
      (ii) is as reliable as is appropriate given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, the witness’ signature is required.

(2) A legal requirement for a signature or seal to be witnessed is not met by means of a witness’ electronic signature unless, in the case of a witness’ signature on information that is required to be given to a person, that person consents to receiving the witness’ electronic signature.

24 **Presumption about reliability of electronic signatures**
(1) For the purposes of sections 22 and 23, it is presumed that an electronic signature is as reliable as is appropriate if –
(a) the means of creating the electronic signature is linked to the signatory and to no other person; and
(b) the means of creating the electronic signature was under the control of the signatory and of no other person; and
(c) any alteration to the electronic signature made after the time of signing is detectable; and
(d) where the purpose of the legal requirement for a signature is to provide assurance as to the integrity of the information to which it relates, any alteration made to that information after the time of signing is detectable.

(2) Subsection (1) does not prevent any person from proving on other grounds or by other means that an electronic signature-
(a) is as reliable as is appropriate; or
(b) is not as reliable as is appropriate.

Retention

25 Requirement to retain document or information in paper form
(1) A legal requirement to retain information that is in paper or other non-electronic form is met by retaining an electronic form of the information if-
(a) the electronic form provides a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information; and
(b) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.
(2) Subsection (1) applies to information that is a public record within the meaning of the Archives Act 1957 only if the Chief Archivist has approved the retention of that information in electronic form.
(3) To avoid doubt, if information is retained in electronic form in accordance with subsection (1), the paper or other non-electronic form of that information need not be retained.

26 Requirement to retain information in electronic form
Subject to section 27, a legal requirement to retain information that is in electronic form is met by retaining the information-
(a) in paper or other non-electronic form if the form provides a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information; or
(b) in electronic form if;
   (i) the electronic form provides a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information; and
   (ii) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

27 Extra conditions for electronic communications
In addition to the conditions specified in section 26, if a person is required to retain information that is contained in an electronic communication,-
(a) the person must also retain such information obtained by that person as enables the identification of-
   (i) the origin of the electronic communication; and
   (ii) the destination of the electronic communication; and
(iii) the time when the electronic communication was sent and the time when it was received; and

(b) the information referred to in paragraph (a) must be readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Provision and production of, and access to, information

28 Requirement to provide or produce information in paper form
A legal requirement to provide or produce information that is in paper or other non-electronic form is met by providing or producing the information in electronic form, whether by means of an electronic communication or otherwise, if
(a) the form and means of the provision or production of the information reliably assures the maintenance of the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, the information is required to be provided or produced; and
(b) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference; and
(c) the person to whom the information is required to be provided or produced consents to the information being provided or produced in an electronic form and, if applicable, by means of an electronic communication.

29 Requirement to provide or produce information in electronic form
A legal requirement to provide or produce information that is in electronic form is met by providing or producing the information-
(a) in paper or other non-electronic form; but, if the maintenance of the integrity of the information cannot be assured, the person who must provide or produce the information must-
(i) notify every person to whom the information is required to be provided or produced of that fact; and
(ii) if requested to do so, provide or produce the information in electronic form in accordance with paragraph (b); or
(b) in electronic form, whether by means of an electronic communication or otherwise, if-
(i) the form and means of the provision or production of the information reliably assures the maintenance of the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, the information is required to be provided or produced; and
(ii) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference; and
(iii) the person to whom the information is required to be provided or produced consents to the provision or production of the information in an electronic form and, if applicable, by means of an electronic communication.

30 Requirement to provide access to information in paper form
A legal requirement to provide access to information that is in paper or other
non-electronic form is met by providing access to the information in electronic form if-

(a) the form and means of access to the information reliably assures the maintenance of the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, access to the information is required to be provided; and

(b) The person to whom access is required to be provided consents to accessing the information in that electronic form.

31 Requirement to provide access to information in electronic form
A legal requirement to provide access to information that is in electronic form is met by providing access to the information-

(a) in paper or other non-electronic form; but, if the maintenance of the integrity of the information cannot be assured, the person who must provide access to the information must-

(i) notify every person to whom access is required to be provided of that fact; and

(ii) if requested to do so, provide access to the information in electronic form in accordance with paragraph (b); or

(b) in electronic form, whether by means of an electronic communication or otherwise, if-

(i) the form and means of access to the information reliably assures the maintenance of the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, access to the information is required to be provided; and

(ii) the person to whom access is required to be provided consents to accessing the information in that electronic form.

Originals

32 Originals
A legal requirement to compare a document with an original document may be met by comparing that document with an electronic form of the original document if the electronic form reliably assures the maintenance of the integrity of the document.

Subpart 3 – Miscellaneous

33 Content requirements
Nothing in this Part affects any legal requirement to the extent that the requirement relates to the content of information.

34 Copyright
The copyright in a work is not infringed by any of the following acts if they are carried out for the purposes of meeting a legal requirement by electronic means:

(a) the generation of an electronic form of a document;

(b) the production of information by means of an electronic communication.
35 Regulations
The Governor-General may, by Order in Council, make regulations prescribing conditions that must be complied with in order to meet a legal requirement specified in those regulations by electronic means.

36 Related amendment to Interpretation Act 1999
Section 29 of the Interpretation Act 1999 is amended by repealing the definition of *writing*, and substituting the following definition:

“*writing* means representing or reproducing words, figures, or symbols in a visible and tangible form and medium (for example, in print)”.
### Part 1
**Enactments**

- **Citizens Initiated Referenda Act 1993** (1993 No 101)
- **Citizens Initiated Referenda Regulations 1995** (SR 1995/227)
- **Electoral Act 1993** (1993 No 87)
- **Electoral Regulations 1996** (SR 1996/93)
- **Fish and Game Council Elections Regulations 1990** (SR 1990/361)
- **Local Elections and Polls Act 1976** (1976 No 144)

### Part 2
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**Part 3**

Descriptions of provisions of enactments

Provisions of enactments that relate to the following:

(a) notices that are required to be given to the public:
(b) information that is required to be given in writing either in person or by registered post:
(c) notices that are required to be attached to any thing or left or displayed in any place:
(d) affidavits, statutory declarations, or other documents given on oath or affirmation:
(e) powers of attorney or enduring powers of attorney:
(f) wills, codicils, or other testamentary instruments:
(g) negotiable instruments:
(h) bills of lading:
(i) instruments or any other documents presented to, deposited with, entered on the register or filed by, the Registrar-General of Land or the Registrar of Deeds:
(j) notices or certificates required to be given to a patient or proposed patient under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 regarding assessments, treatments, alterations to treatments, or any review process:
(k) requirements to produce or serve a warrant or other document that authorises-
   (i) entry on premises; or
   (ii) the search of any person, place, or thing; or
   (iii) the seizure of any thing:
(l) information required in respect of any goods or services by a consumer information standard or a product safety standard or a services safety standard prescribed under the Fair Trading Act 1986:
Part 4
Provisions of enactments relating to certain courts and tribunals

Provisions of enactments relating to the practice or procedure of any of the following:

(1) the Court of Appeal or the High Court continued by the Judicature Act 1908:
(2) District Courts continued by the District Courts Act 1947:
(3) Family Courts established under the Family Courts Act 1980:
(4) Youth Courts established under the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989:
(5) Disputes Tribunals established under the Disputes Tribunals Act 1988:
(6) the Maori Appellate Court and the Maori Land Court continued under Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993:
(7) the Courts-Martial Appeal Court constituted under the Courts Martial Appeals Act 1953:
(8) Courts-Martial convened under the Armed Forces Discipline Act 1971:
(9) the Customs Appeal Authority established under the Customs and Excise Act 1996:
(10) the Catch History Review Committee established under the Fisheries Act 1996:
(11) the Quota Appeal Authority established under the Fisheries Act 1983:
(12) Land Valuation Tribunals established under the Land Valuation Proceedings Act 1948:
(13) Motor Vehicles Disputes Tribunals established under the Motor Vehicles Dealers Act 1975:
(14) the Refugee Status Appeals Authority and the Removal Review Authority continued by, and the Residence Appeal Authority established under, the Immigration Act 1987:
(15) the Social Security Appeal Authority and the Benefits Review Committees established under the Social Security Act 1964, and any Appeal Board appointed under section 53A of that Act:
(16) the Student Allowance Appeal Authority established under the Education Act 1989:
(17) the Survey Board of New Zealand constituted under the Survey Act 1986:
(18) the Tenancy Tribunal constituted under the Residential Tenancies Act 1986:
(19) the State Housing Appeal Authority constituted under the Housing Restructuring (Appeals) Regulations 2000:
(20) the Environment Court continued by the Resource Management Act 1991:
(21) the Waitangi Tribunal established under the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975:
(22) the Dental Technicians Board and the Dental Council of New Zealand constituted by, the Dentists Disciplinary Tribunal, the Clinical Dental Technicians Disciplinary Tribunal, and the Dental Technicians Disciplinary Tribunal constituted under, and Complaints Assessments Committees appointed under, the Dental Act 1988:
(23) the Dietitians Board continued by, and the Penal Cases Committee appointed under, the Dietitians Act 1950:
(24) the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board, the Medical Radiation Technologists Board, and the Podiatrists Board, continued by the Medical Auxiliaries Act 1966:
(25) the Medical Council of New Zealand continued by, the Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal constituted under, and Complaints Assessment Committees appointed under, the Medical Practitioners Act 1995:
(26) the Nursing Council of New Zealand continued by, and the Preliminary Proceedings Committee appointed under, the Nurses Act 1977:
(27) the Opticians Board continued by, and the Penal Cases Committee appointed under, the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Act 1976:
(28) the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand continued by, and the Disciplinary Committee of the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand appointed under, the Pharmacy Act 1970:
(29) the Physiotherapy Board continued by, and the Director of Proceedings, as defined in, the Physiotherapy Act 1949:
(30) the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board constituted under the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 1976:
(31) the Psychologists Board continued by, and Complaints Assessment Committees established under, the Psychologists Act 1981.