



# Electronic Courts and Tribunals Act 2016

Public Act      2016 No 52  
Date of assent      17 October 2016  
Commencement      see section 2

## Contents

	Page
1      Title	2
2      Commencement	2
<i>Preliminary provisions</i>	
3      Purpose	2
4      Interpretation	3
5      Act binds the Crown	4
<i>General provisions</i>	
6      Application	4
7      Permitted documents may be used	4
8      Consent may be inferred from person's conduct	4
9      Presumption of validity	5
10     Certain documents to be treated as permitted documents	5
<i>Manner in which permitted documents meet certain non-electronic requirements</i>	
11     Requirement for information to be in writing	5
12     Requirement for information to be recorded in writing	5
13     Requirement for information to be given in writing	5
14     Requirement to provide multiple copies of information	6
15     Requirement to provide information in certain form	6
16     Requirement for signatures	6
17     Requirement for signatures of witnesses	6
18     Requirement for seals	7
19     Presumption about reliability of electronic signatures	7

20	Requirement to retain document or information that is in paper-based form	7
21	Requirement to retain information that is in electronic form	8
22	Extra conditions for electronic communications	8
23	Requirement to provide or produce information that is in paper-based form	8
24	Requirement to provide or produce information that is in electronic form	9
25	Requirement to provide access to information that is in paper-based form	9
26	Requirement to provide access to information that is in electronic form	9
27	Requirement relating to content of information	10
28	Copyright in works in permitted documents	10
	<i>Rules regarding transmission of permitted documents</i>	
29	Time of dispatch of permitted documents	10
30	Time of receipt of permitted documents	10
31	Place of filing	10
	<i>Fees and regulations</i>	
32	Filing fees payable for permitted documents	11
33	Regulations	11
	<i>Consequential amendments and transitional provisions</i>	
34	Amendment to Electronic Identity Verification Act 2012	12
35	Amendment to Electronic Transactions Act 2002	12
36	Amendment to Resource Management Act 1991	12
37	Transitional provisions	12

**The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:**

**1 Title**

This Act is the Electronic Courts and Tribunals Act 2016.

**2 Commencement**

This Act comes into force on 1 March 2017.

*Preliminary provisions*

**3 Purpose**

The purpose of this Act is to—

- (a) facilitate the use of permitted documents in, or with respect to, the proceedings of courts and tribunals; and

- (b) allow references to documents in existing enactments relating to the processes of courts and tribunals to be interpreted as including permitted documents; and
- (c) permit the filing of permitted documents at any specified place.

#### 4 Interpretation

- (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

**associated process** means a process that a court or tribunal, or a participant in proceedings before a court or tribunal, uses to create a document, including signing, sealing, witnessing, and filing the document

**electronic** includes electrical, digital, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, biometric, and photonic

**information system** means a system for producing, sending, receiving, storing, displaying, or otherwise processing electronic communications

**Minister** means the Minister or Ministers of the Crown who, under the authority of any warrant or with the authority of the Prime Minister, is or are for the time being responsible for the administration of this Act

**paper-based form** means a format or layout that applies to information in paper or other non-electronic form, including (but not limited to) the material that must be used

**permitted document** means a document, including its associated process, in electronic form that is made by, or for use in, a court or tribunal.

- (2) None of the following documents is a permitted document unless and until the Governor-General, by Order in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister, declares it to be a permitted document:

- (a) a document given on oath or by affirmation:
- (b) a statutory declaration:
- (c) a will, a codicil, or any other testamentary instrument:
- (d) a power of attorney or an enduring power of attorney:
- (e) a negotiable instrument:
- (f) any notice required to be attached to any thing or left or displayed in any place:
- (g) any warrant or other instrument authorising entry into premises or the search or seizure of any person or thing:
- (h) any other document specified by the Governor-General by Order in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister:
- (i) an item specified in any of paragraphs (a) to (h) that is required to be served by personal service.

## **5 Act binds the Crown**

This Act binds the Crown.

### *General provisions*

## **6 Application**

- (1) This Act applies to 1 or more of the following specified by the Governor-General by Order in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister:
  - (a) any court or tribunal:
  - (b) any particular jurisdiction of a court or tribunal:
  - (c) any court or tribunal located in a particular place:
  - (d) any particular jurisdiction of a court or tribunal located in a particular place.
- (2) This Act does not apply to any class of persons specified by the Governor-General by Order in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister.

## **7 Permitted documents may be used**

- (1) A court or tribunal, or a participant in proceedings before a court or tribunal, may use permitted documents in, or with respect to, the proceedings of the court or tribunal.
- (2) However, nothing in this Act requires a person to use, provide, or accept a permitted document without the person's consent.
- (3) Despite subsection (2), a class of persons specified in regulations made under section 33 may be required to use, provide, or accept a permitted document—
  - (a) in a specified court or tribunal; or
  - (b) in a specified jurisdiction of a court or tribunal; or
  - (c) in specified circumstances.
- (4) Nothing in subsection (2) overrides any provision in any other Act that requires a person to use, provide, or accept a permitted document.

## **8 Consent may be inferred from person's conduct**

A person's consent to use, provide, or accept a permitted document may be inferred from the person's conduct, including (but not limited to)—

- (a) filing a permitted document with a court or tribunal:
- (b) providing to a court or tribunal an electronic address where permitted documents may be sent.

Compare: 2006 No 40 s 219(1)

**9 Presumption of validity**

In the absence of proof to the contrary, a document is not invalid merely because it is a permitted document.

**10 Certain documents to be treated as permitted documents**

A court or tribunal must treat a reference to a document, or its associated process, in an enactment relating to the processes of a court or tribunal as a reference to a permitted document unless—

- (a) the enactment explicitly provides otherwise; or
- (b) the context of the enactment requires a different interpretation.

Compare: 1999 No 85 s 4(1)

*Manner in which permitted documents meet certain non-electronic requirements*

**11 Requirement for information to be in writing**

A requirement that information be in writing is met by information in a permitted document if the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 18

**12 Requirement for information to be recorded in writing**

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

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 19

**13 Requirement for information to be given in writing**

- (1) A requirement to give information in writing is met by giving the information in a permitted document if the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies even if the information must be given in a specified manner (for example, by filing, sending, serving, delivering, lodging, or posting the information).
- (3) In this section, **requirement to give information** includes (but is not limited to)—
  - (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:
- (k) lodging an appeal.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 20(1), (3), (4)

#### **14 Requirement to provide multiple copies of information**

A requirement to provide multiple copies of information to the same person at the same time is met by providing a single electronic version of the information in a permitted document.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 20(2)

#### **15 Requirement to provide information in certain form**

A requirement to provide information in a manner that complies with a paper-based form is met by providing the information in a permitted document if the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 21

#### **16 Requirement for signatures**

A requirement for a signature, other than a witness's signature, is met in a permitted document 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.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 22(1)

#### **17 Requirement for signatures of witnesses**

A requirement for a signature or a seal to be witnessed is met in a permitted document by means of a witness's electronic signature if,—

- (a) in the case of the witnessing of a signature, the signature to be witnessed is an electronic signature that complies with section 16; 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's signature is required.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 23(1)

## **18 Requirement for seals**

A requirement for a seal is met in a permitted document by means of an electronic seal if the electronic seal—

- (a) adequately identifies the party attaching the seal; and
- (b) is as reliable as is appropriate given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, the seal is required.

## **19 Presumption about reliability of electronic signatures**

- (1) For the purposes of sections 16 and 17, an electronic signature is presumed to be 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.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 24

## **20 Requirement to retain document or information that is in paper-based form**

- (1) A requirement to retain information that is in paper-based form is met by retaining an electronic form of the information in a permitted document if—
  - (a) the electronic form provides a reliable means of maintaining 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 Public Records Act 2005 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-based form of that information need not be retained.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 25

## **21 Requirement to retain information that is in electronic form**

A requirement to retain information that is in a permitted document is met by retaining the information—

- (a) in paper-based form if the paper-based form provides a reliable means of maintaining the integrity of the information; or
- (b) in electronic form if—
  - (i) the electronic form provides a reliable means of maintaining the integrity of the information; and
  - (ii) the information is readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 26

## **22 Extra conditions for electronic communications**

In addition to the conditions specified in section 21, if a person is required to retain information in a permitted document that consists of or includes an electronic communication,—

- (a) the person must also retain the details obtained by that person that enable 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 details referred to in paragraph (a) must be readily accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 27

## **23 Requirement to provide or produce information that is in paper-based form**

A requirement to provide or produce information in paper-based 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 maintain 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.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 28(a), (b)

#### **24 Requirement to provide or produce information that is in electronic form**

A requirement to provide or produce information that is in a permitted document is met by providing or producing the information—

- (a) in paper-based form, but, if the integrity of the information cannot be reliably maintained, 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 if—
  - (i) the form and means of the provision or production of the information reliably maintain 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.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 29(a), (b)(i), (ii)

#### **25 Requirement to provide access to information that is in paper-based form**

A requirement to provide access to information that is in paper-based form is met by providing access to the information in a permitted document if the form and means of access to the information reliably maintain the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, access to the information is required to be provided.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 30(a)

#### **26 Requirement to provide access to information that is in electronic form**

A requirement to provide access to information that is in a permitted document is met by providing access to the information—

- (a) in paper-based form, but, if the integrity of the information cannot be reliably maintained, 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 the form and means of access to the information reliably maintain the integrity of the information, given the purpose for which, and the circumstances in which, access to the information is required to be provided.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 31(a), (b)(i)

## **27 Requirement relating to content of information**

Nothing in this Act affects any requirement in any enactment to the extent that the requirement relates to the content of information.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 33

## **28 Copyright in works in permitted documents**

The copyright in a work in a permitted document is not infringed by any of the following acts if they are carried out for the purposes of meeting a paper-based 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.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 34

### *Rules regarding transmission of permitted documents*

## **29 Time of dispatch of permitted documents**

A permitted document is taken to be dispatched at the time the permitted document first enters an information system outside the control of the originator.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 10(1)

## **30 Time of receipt of permitted documents**

A permitted document is taken to be received at the time the permitted document first enters the information system that the addressee has designated for the purpose of receiving the permitted document.

Compare: 2002 No 35 s 11(a)

## **31 Place of filing**

- (1) Despite section 37(2) or any provision in any other enactment, a court or tribunal, or a participant in proceedings before a court or tribunal, may file a permitted document at any place that is specified in regulations made under section 33.
- (2) The place for filing may be—
  - (a) centralised or located within the jurisdiction of the relevant court or tribunal:
  - (b) physical or electronic.

*Fees and regulations***32 Filing fees payable for permitted documents**

- (1) Despite section 37(2) or any provision to the contrary in any other enactment, a person who files a permitted document with a court or a tribunal must pay—
  - (a) the fee that is prescribed for that document in regulations made under section 33; or
  - (b) if a fee is not prescribed for that document in regulations made under section 33, the fee (if any) that would apply under the relevant enactment if the person were to file the document in its paper-based form less any discount prescribed in regulations made under section 33.
- (2) A fee that is payable under subsection (1)(a) is inclusive of goods and services tax.
- (3) Whether a fee that is payable under subsection (1)(b) is inclusive or exclusive of goods and services tax is to be determined under the relevant enactment.

**33 Regulations**

The Governor-General may, by Order in Council, make regulations for all or any of the following purposes:

- (a) prescribing any conditions that a permitted document must meet to be used, provided, or accepted by a court or tribunal, or a participant in proceedings before a court or tribunal:
- (b) prescribing the form or forms of permitted documents:
- (c) prescribing any fees for the filing of permitted documents:
- (d) prescribing any fee discount, which may be expressed as—
  - (i) a specified amount that applies to a specified document; or
  - (ii) a percentage that applies to a range of documents:
- (e) prescribing the place or places for filing permitted documents:
- (f) specifying any classes of persons required to use, provide, or accept a permitted document—
  - (i) in a specified court or tribunal in which the permitted document must be used, provided, or accepted:
  - (ii) in a specified jurisdiction of a court or tribunal in which the permitted document must be used, provided, or accepted:
  - (iii) in specified circumstances in which the permitted document must be used, provided, or accepted:
- (g) providing for any other matters that are contemplated by, or necessary for, giving full effect to this Act and its due administration.

*Consequential amendments and transitional provisions*

**34 Amendment to Electronic Identity Verification Act 2012**

- (1) This section amends the Electronic Identity Verification Act 2012.
- (2) After section 67(1)(c), insert:
  - (ca) a court or tribunal specified in an order made under section 6 of the Electronic Courts and Tribunals Act 2016:

**35 Amendment to Electronic Transactions Act 2002**

- (1) This section amends the Electronic Transactions Act 2002.
- (2) In the Schedule, Part 1, insert in its appropriate alphabetical order:
  - Electronic Courts and Tribunals Act 2016 (2016 No 52)

**36 Amendment to Resource Management Act 1991**

- (1) This section amends the Resource Management Act 1991.
- (2) After section 352(1), insert:
  - (1A) Nothing in subsection (1) overrides the provisions of the Electronic Courts and Tribunals Act 2016.

**37 Transitional provisions**

- (1) If any relevant provision of this Act applies to a court or tribunal, it applies to all proceedings commenced in that court or tribunal before, on, or after the application of that provision except—
  - (a) the continuation of a hearing that commenced before the application of that provision; and
  - (b) any appeal from, or review of, a determination made at a hearing of that kind.
- (2) Any legislative instrument amending the rules of court that is made after the commencement of this section must be consistent with the provisions of this Act.

Compare: 2006 No 69 s 5

**Legislative history**

14 September 2016	Divided from Judicature Modernisation Bill (Bill 178–2) as Bill 178–3E
11 October 2016	Third reading
17 October 2016	Royal assent

This Act is administered by the Ministry of Justice.