

**The Gene Technology Bill
Contains a Covert Assault
on Our Kiwi Culture**

A top-down view of a white plate with a piece of salmon. A silver fork is on the left and a silver knife is on the right. A blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the bottom half of the plate.

Hatchard Report

Dr. Guy Hatchard

The Gene Technology Bill Contains a Covert Assault on Our Kiwi Culture

Anyone living in New Zealand today will be aware of how much we, as individuals and as a people, value our identity and cultural values. We know from our everyday acquaintances, colleagues, family members or whanau that we must maintain respect for individual preferences and ideas. We have always known from the beginning that we need the space to live as we believe. This has been a vital part of Kiwi life stretching back to our forebears.



Click here to play

00:00

00:00

The extraordinary provisions of the Gene Technology Bill, currently before Parliament, threaten to overturn these values. The Bill does so under the radar, deceptively posing as a matter of scientific verity and economic freedom when in fact it will change our way of life for ever. Biotechnology is all about life. It edits life from its most fundamental physical level—our genes.

From now on, a government-appointed regulator will have the power to make decisions about our life, our genetic heritage, for all of us. In one stroke sweeping away concepts of individual rights and choice. As a result of the last five pandemic years, we all know that this can go terribly wrong. Genetic material is highly mobile, it cannot be contained, recalled or remediated. That is not just a scientific fact, but has now become our personal experience.

In contravention of this fact, in an extraordinary step of deception, the Bill proposes that gene technology is so safe that many if not most gene altered foods, crops, microbes, and animals can be released into the environment or food chain without any special identification. For us, this means that novel foods will appear on our supermarket shelves without labelling or anything to distinguish them from what we and our ancestors have been happily eating for eons.

We have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with our traditional food sources for millions of years. Our physiology has co-evolved with the genetic structures of our foods. Multiple large studies show that diets rich in natural gene-based food sources including fruits and vegetables improve health outcomes, prevent cancer and support longevity. The detailed genetic structures involved are important, altering them is a door to uncharted territory. Removing labelling is a provision that involves forced relocation into this unhealthy territory.

The Gene Technology Bill Contains a Covert Assault on Our Kiwi Culture

To cap this egregious provision, the Bill removes any criminal liability for altering genes. A get out of jail free card for the Frankensteins of our generation.

If that doesn't rock your boat, think about the vast areas of life that biotechnology doesn't even begin to understand yet proposes to alter. First among these: our Being. Yesterday I had the tiniest speck of wood, about the size of a pin point lodged in the ball of my thumb, but it had registered its presence and needed to be taken out, the work of seconds. Immediate relief. Awareness ranges effortlessly from the microscopic to the majestic immensity of the Cosmos, yet how our genes support this ability is a total mystery.

One of our most read articles in 2024 was entitled "[Can Biotechnology Control Human Behaviour?](#)" It reported evidence that *"gene editing, including any sort of editing of the chain of genetic functions within cells, could more or less automatically change our behaviour and psychological profile"* in ways that no one currently understands.

Cultures around the world, hold sacred beliefs about the natural order of things, the divine status of human life and the continuity of our ancestral heritage:

- Judeo-Christians believe that *"God created man in his own image"* and *"The Kingdom of Heaven is within"*
- Hindus believe that each person is intrinsically divine and the purpose of life is to seek and realise the divinity within all of us.
- Buddha taught that each one of us is divine in our very essence.
- Islam considers human life more sacred than the holy Kaaba.
- Taoism teaches that humans are part of the larger cosmos and should live in harmony with the universe. They believe along with countless other traditions and modern ecological philosophies that all living things are connected in a mutually supportive biofield.
- The Maori Whakapapa of the World speaks of *Io Te Kakano*—Te purapura i tupu ake ai nga mea katoa o te Ao (the seed from which all things in the universe grow) and *Io Te Mauri*—Te mea ora i roto i nga mea katoa o Te Ao (The living element in all things created in the Universe)

The Gene Technology Bill Contains a Covert Assault on Our Kiwi Culture

Only 7% of the world's population are atheists, among them James Watson, the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, and Richard Dawkins biologist who both reject the sacred views of the vast majority of the world's population and believe that redesigning the natural order is the destiny of the human race. The New Zealand government apparently follows this path, since they are removing any ability of the public to know what has been altered by gene editing on our dinner plate or in our environment.

Moreover the Bill requires *"Mandatory Medical Activity Authorisations"* *"Emergency Medical Use Authorisations"* which grants the Minister responsible for the Gene Technology Bill (Judith Collins) special powers when there is in their opinion an actual or imminent threat to the health and safety of people or to the environment. A provision wide open to misinterpretation and misuse.

The rights and choices accepted as a normal part of everyday Kiwi life were hard won in the distant past. The New Zealand Bill of Rights was an attempt by legislators, not to grant new rights to Kiwis but to set down in stone the principles of natural justice and the constitutional rights that have been generally accepted and followed in our history. These include:

Clause 10 Right not to be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation—Every person has the right not to be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation without that person's consent.

Clause 13 Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion—Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, including the right to adopt and to hold opinions without interference.

Clause 20 Rights of minorities—A person who belongs to an ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority in New Zealand shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of that minority, to enjoy the culture, to profess and practise the religion, or to use the language of that minority.

Make no mistake about it, the introduction of novel biotechnologies without specific requirements for identification, ethical evaluation, labelling or containment, instead devolving these powers to a regulator, is a very clear violation of all three of these clauses.

The Gene Technology Bill Contains a Covert Assault on Our Kiwi Culture

The regulator will be required to call for public submissions on each of their future rulings on hundreds of biotechnology projects, but the Bill does not require that they should take specific account of these submissions, merely consider them. In practice, almost no one will have the time to respond to these projects. In other words, of necessity our fundamental rights will be violated on hundreds of occasions and in hundreds of ways that will remain opaque to any scrutiny, assessment of effects or liability. And due to the nature of gene editing, these will remain without any possibility of recall, remediation or redress.

The risks of biotechnology are extraordinary. Of which, Professor Tim Spector OBE, Downing Street advisor and leading expert on gene editing at King's College London, recently wrote in the UK Telegraph: experimentation in *"labs across the world should face more oversight and be treated with the same seriousness as a nuclear threat."* In complete defiance of this warning and that of many other leading biotechnologists waking up to the risks, the New Zealand Gene Technology Bill is setting out the most permissive gene regulation framework in the world—a clear prescription for disaster that sweeps away our personal preferences and traditional rights, as well as dearly held cultural, ecological and religious values.

The government holds up the prospect of improved public health and economic benefit as its justification, but is there sufficient sound scientific evidence of this? No, absolutely not. Our recent article "[Waking Up From the Dream of Biotechnology](#)" reveals the flimsy and unsubstantiated nature of the government justifications for a wholesale change in our way of life and cultural norms.

There are a lot of reasons to reject the Gene Technology Bill. Find out more by viewing our YouTube video [The Gene Technology Bill. What Kiwis Need To Know](#) and then [make a submission](#) to the Health Select Committee by February 17th. We have published suggestions for [a submission template](#). Write to your MP. They need to be quizzed on this egregious Bill. They are trying to get this fast tracked during the holidays.

We do not live in a country where people are willing to let others take away their food choices, their rights, their beliefs and increase exposure to serious long term environmental and health risks.

Dr. Guy Hatchard

10 January 2025