**MP CAREER RESEARCH SHOW “VERY DIVERSE PARLIAMENT”**

**Analysis of Members of Parliament’s careers produced by BlacklandPR shows that New Zealand’s 53rd Parliament is extremely diverse and characterised by a wide range of professional experiences.**

Blackland PR Director Mark Blackham says the findings show that despite perceptions of the rise of a professional class of politicians, New Zealand’s elected representatives display a surprising depth of career diversity and work experiences.

“There is a pervasive myth that elected representatives the world over have come to constitute their own elite professional class and have little real-world experience. Our analysis of the in New Zealand’s 53rd Parliament dispels this myth and shows that there is a wide range of experiences and careers represented by current MPs.

The research identified more than 200 discernible careers across New Zealand’s 120 MPs, with most MPs having had two distinct professions before being elected to Parliament. The analysis found that even among professions that are often regarded as careers for life, such as the law, 8 of the 20 lawyers currently in Parliament have significant career experience in another field.

“Careers and professional experiences shape people and their worldviews. Understanding the career backgrounds of New Zealand’s current MPs will give New Zealanders a better grasp of the policies, industries and professional interests they may hope to champion while in Parliament.

**Parties conform to type**

While the data show a wide range of experiences across Parliament, the breakdown across party lines does reinforce some of the pre-existing stereotypes that exist.

ACT has a high proportion of small business owners including Nicole McKee who ran a firearms safety consultancy, and Toni Severin who operated a family-owned waterblasting firm.

Many members of the Green Party caucus have backgrounds in social and community work. Exemplifying this was co-leader Marama Davidson, who previously worked as a Race Relations Advisor for the Human Rights Commission, and Jan Logie who has significant experience working with Women’s Refuge.

The Labour Party, with 65 of the 120 MPs in Parliament, is home to a broad range of professional experiences across many industries. However, within their ranks there is very strong public sector experience, with MPs such as Grant Robertson and Barbara Edmunds making their careers in the public sector and working for other elected officials. The caucus also has a large number of lawyers, teachers and union officials in its ranks.

The National Party caucus is home to a many former private sector managers such as former Air New Zealand CEO Christopher Luxon, and Todd Muller, who was once the General Manager of Zespri. Notwithstanding private sector managers, other prominent career backgrounds include financial services and the primary industries.

The Maori Party, with a caucus of two, also contains a wide range of experiences. Rawiri Waititi has been a lecturer, and worked in the health and social sectors through the Waipareira Trust, while his coleader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer has experience in Maori broadcasting, management and as the former Deputy Mayor of South Taranaki District Council.

**Not owning their experiences**

When researching MPs’ career backgrounds, Blackland PR found that most MPs omitted at least one significant role from their official biographies.

“Many MPs are keen to project a polished image of themselves as having always worked in white collar roles, or otherwise detail little of their professional careers before being elected to Parliament. Many of the omitted jobs tend to be exceptionally normal, relatable to many people, and certainly not something for MPs to be embarrassed about.

“We think New Zealand’s elected representatives should be more transparent about their background experiences. Doing so will help our MPs become even more relatable to the New Zealand public, and allow them to more easily identify areas of particular expertise,” says Blackham.

Data was to produce this analysis was taken from MPs’ public biographies, social media, media articles, and via written responses from MPs’ offices. Responses were then categorised into the career industries and roles used by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in their [Occupation Outlook](https://occupationoutlook.mbie.govt.nz/) tool.

**ENDS**

**Appendix 1   
  
Career industries represented across the New Zealand Parliament**

**Appendix 2**

**Roles represented in the 53rd Parliament**

**Appendix 3 – Party career industries and roles**

**ACT New Zealand**

**Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand**

**New Zealand Labour Party**

**New Zealand National Party**

**Maori Party**