

'Sovereign Citizens' – a pseudo law movement



Presented at ILANZ 2024 by:

- Leith Townshend, Tasman District Council
- Hayley Bowman, New Zealand Police

❑ What is a Sovereign Citizen (SC)?

- *“highly diverse, decentralised movement that claims that national governments are illegitimate and that individuals can legally withdraw their consent to be governed by national governments” (2021 NZ Threat Insight Group).*
- ❑ *“Sovereign citizens are anti-government extremists who believe that even though they physically reside in this country, they are separate or “sovereign” from the United States. As a result, they believe they don’t have to answer to any government authority, including courts, taxing entities, motor vehicle departments, or law enforcement.” (FBI).*
- *“A form of legal quackery or snake oil”, (Donald J. Netolitzky, Canadian legal scholar)*
- ❑ *“The whole sovereign citizen thing is basically treating law like a form of magic.” (Andrew Geddis, Otago University Law Professor).*

○ Commonly held ideas

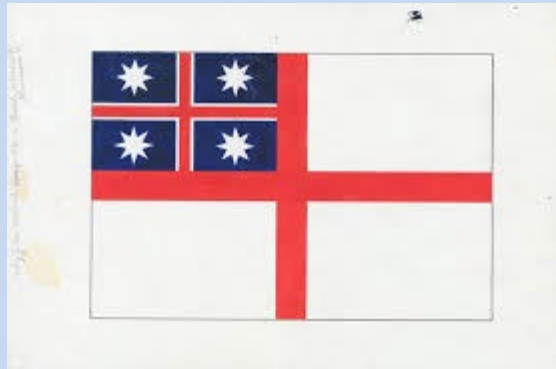
- The strawman duality
 - Everything is a contract
- Silence means agreement
 - Absence of consent
- Defective State Law (the Government has no authority)
 - Legal action requires an injured party
- Monetary and banking conspiracy theories





○ Where did the movement come from?

- Emerged in 1970s and 1980s in America, with increasing gap between rich and poor;
- Emerged from combination of tax protester ideas, Pseudolaw and white supremacist movement (but now attracts many different ethnicities);
- Popular for those in hard times:
 - People want to believe they can annul their debts by renouncing citizenship or escape criminal convictions/prison;
 - Now popular amongst minority groups;
 - Popular in times of unrest when citizens struggle with State exercising control
 - E.g. Covid.



☐ New Zealand context

- Been in NZ for over a decade
- Overlap with Maori sovereignty movement



Parliament Occupation



'Sovereign citizens' tying councils up with rates refusal and red tape

Amy Ridout · 05:00, Jun 10 2023



Sovereign citizens are tying up councils across New Zealand with paperwork, including rates refusal and other processes.

Sovereign citizen defence 'mumbo jumbo' and abuse of court process, judge rules



By Kurt Bayer

21 Sep, 2022, 10:56 AM · 3 mins to read

Save Share



Legal action by a 'sovereign citizen' amounted to an abuse of process, a judge has ruled. Photo / NZME

'Living People': Who Are Sovereign Citizens And Why Do They Believe They Have Immunity From The Law?



Wednesday, 29 July 2020, 5:22 pm

Opinion: **The Conversation**

Kaz Ross

You might have seen articles or comments on social media lately alluding to "sovereign citizens", or "SovCits" for short, with some reports suggesting COVID-19 government restrictions have driven a **surge of interest** in this movement.

So, who are these self-styled sovereign citizens, and what do they believe?

'Not under your jurisdiction': How the phenomenon known as 'pseudolaw' is clogging up courts.

Charlie Mitchell · 05:00, May 28 2023



ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD WOODLEY

More extreme incarnations of pseudolaw include people who claim to be "sheriffs".

'The death sentence will be sought': sovereign citizen threatens escalating, says council head

Amy Ridout · 05:00, May 20 2023



21. The theatre and its system of management through stage plays, scripts, productions in the areas of the theatre of war, theatre of commerce, political theatre, street theatre, movie theatres, operating theatres, etc., are on notice.

21.1 All those responsible for creating all forms of theatre that cause harm and / or destroy people's lives, physically, spiritually or mentally, are (100%) one hundred percent liable for damages in their private and public capacity.

22. Forgiveness can be asked for as a public confession, and forgiveness can be given in the private and in the public.

22.1 You are commanded to forward this text / email to all of your colleagues associates family members etc.

23. Because so much damage has been done by way of barbarism, heinous crimes, invidious conduct, the death sentence will be sought by the Chief Justice of New Zealand, Master-Master, Preceptorial-Judge & 13th of the 13th Month [Redacted]

Minister of Faith contacted by [Redacted] and [Redacted] [\[Redacted\]](#)
Minister of Justice contacted by [Redacted] and [Redacted] [\[Redacted\]](#)
British National Front Party Member [Redacted] [\[Redacted\]](#) [\[Redacted\]](#)
Bank-Banking [\[Redacted\]](#)

A death threat sent to Tasman District Council from a "sovereign citizen".

INTERNET October 27, 2021

The 'Sovereign Hikoi of Truth' - explained



Dylan Reeve

Share Story



Source from the New Zealand Herald

Last night a protest fleet was halted by police at the Mercer checkpoint on the road to Auckland. What is this self-described 'hikoi' all about? For IRL, Dylan Reeve explains.

The collapse of New Freeland, the sovereign citizen Utopia that wasn't

Charlie Mitchell | May 6, 2023



Co-sovereign founder Kahyyn Alp outside the Christchurch District Court. CHRIS SKELTON / STUFF

Saturday, 12 November 2022

Man demands \$6000 from police in bizarre 'sovereign citizen' argument

Guy Williams

2549 752

Regions > Queenstown

A Queenstown man refused to undergo a roadside breath test, then demanded police pay him \$6000 in "gold bullion" for taking up his time.

When Reuben Jeremiah Henry (30), carpenter, appeared in the Queenstown District Court on Thursday on charges arising from the July 22 incident, he proffered a "sovereign citizen" argument in





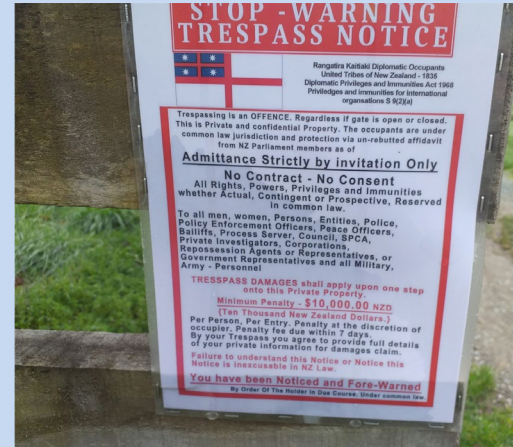
How do you know
you are dealing with
a sovereign citizen?





- Government is a corporation
 - No consent, no contract
- References to Admiralty/Maritime law
 - They will define words in interesting ways
- Claims of 'strawman' or 'strawman funds'
 - Claims allodial title to public property
- Changes to names or capitalization of names – Leith of House Townshend, LEITH-DONALD
 - May refer to themselves as 'Non-resident Settlers', "Living man/woman"
- Documents are notarised in some way, even when not required
 - Phrases like 'Notice of Default', "Notice to agent is notice to principal, notice to principal is notice to agent", "All beneficial rights reserved in equity"
- Signed with a thumb print and a 'wet ink signature'
 - Signed over a stamp.

Allodial Title




LEGAL

ADMIRALTY LAW JURISPRUDENCE WHY? COMMON LAW

MARITIME LAW LAND LAW

LAW OF THE SEA LAW OF THE LAND

IMPERIAL LAW NATURAL LAW

FEE SIMPLE TITLE ALLODIAL TITLE

SEA ✓ SALVAGE LAW ✓ LAND LAW

✓ CUSTOM & DUTIES ✓ CONTRACT LAW

✓ INTERNATIONAL TRADE ✓ CRIMINAL LAW

✓ TORT LAW

LAND ✗ EQUITY LAW

FRAUD CREATION ✗

LAND • MORTGAGES • BIRTH CERT

• FEES & PENALTIES • BANKING SYSTEM

• IRD / TAX • STOCK EXCHANGE

• COMPANY LAW

Fee Simple Title VS Allodial Title

ATION // END YOUR OWN ENSLAVEMENT // END GLOBALIST CONTROL

Court action follows Tasman couple's refusal to pay rates based on 1649 proclamation



By [Tracy Neal](#)
Open Justice multimedia journalist,
Nelson-Marlborough

Save | Share

5 Jul, 2023 05:00 AM ⌚ 4 mins to read

Effect on Local Government

- More individuals refusing to pay their rates or charges.
- Increased challenges and costs in enforcement proceedings.
- Weaponizing of LGOIMA (information requests) and complaints.
- Accessibility of Council staff and elected members.
- Security/safety concerns

Total rates assessed 2021/2022

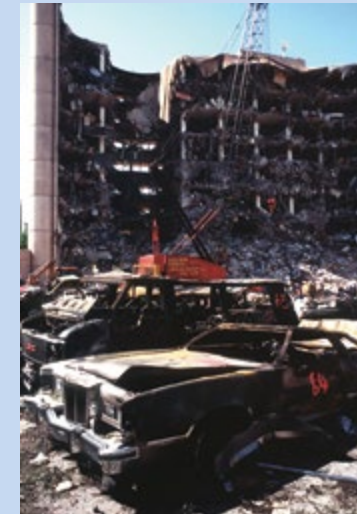
Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Units	Rate	Annual Amount	Special Value Legal Description	Units	Rate	Annual Amount
APPRAISAL GENERAL CHARGE	1	219,000,000.00	219,000,000.00	REGIONAL COUNCIL, GENERAL RATE	119,000	6,000,000.00	718,200.00
DISTRICT LIBRARY CHARGE	1	14,000,000.00	14,000,000.00	REGIONAL COUNCIL, REGIONAL & SAFETY SERVICES	1	2,770,000.00	2,770,000.00
KATIKATI PROMOTION CHARGE	1	7,000,000.00	7,000,000.00	REG ONCL CIVIL DEFENCE RATE	1	24,000,000.00	24,000,000.00
KATIKATI RESOURCE CENTRE	1	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00	REG ONCL TRANSPORT RATE	1	21,770,000.00	21,770,000.00
KATIKATI TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT	1	25,000,000.00	25,000,000.00	REGIONAL COUNCIL, UAC	1	142,800,000.00	142,800,000.00
WESTERN BAY MUSEUM	1	3,100,000.00	3,100,000.00				
CONCRETE RATE	1,105,000	0.00000000	907.81				
COURTNEY ROAD RATE KATIKATI	1	21,800,000.00	21,800,000.00				
ROAD RATE	703,000	0.00000000	58.74				
ROADING CHARGE	1	18,800,000.00	18,800,000.00				
RURAL HORSES CHARGE	1	207,000,000.00	207,000,000.00				
SOLID WASTE KATIKATI	1	83,700,000.00	83,700,000.00				
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	1	65,600,000.00	65,600,000.00				
KATIKATI COMPOSTY PILL CHARGE	1	17,000,000.00	17,000,000.00				
KERRISSE COLLECTION PILL SERVICE	1	12,000,000.00	12,000,000.00				
WESTERN METERED WATER - TREATMENT AND SUPPLY	1	270,000.00	270,000.00				
				TOTAL excl GST			380.28
				COMBINED TOTAL Includes GST of			488.14
				TOTAL RATES (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022)			\$3,707.01
				Opening balance 1 July (from prior year)			0.00
				Previous instalment this year			1,883.04
				Payments received this year			1,883.50M
				Penalties incurred this year			0.00
				Adjustments this year			0.00
				Balance brought forward			0.00
				Instalment 2 of 2			1,662.06
				01 Jan 2022 - 30 Jun 2022			

No consent to contract

23. Because so much damage has been done by way of barbarism, heinous crimes, insidious conduct, the death sentence will be sought by the Chief-Federal-Postal-Court-Judge, Muster-Master, Plenipotentiary-Judge & 13th of the 13th Month: Section 7(2)(a) - Protection of Privacy Section 7(2)(a) - Protection of Privacy

Police interactions

- Parliament Occupation;
 - Belief that Police have no powers of arrest, child sex slaves under parliament; refusing to give details when arrested;
- Occupation of houses and parks (allodial title);
- Traffic – bogus car registrations/no license;
- Fake IDs for diplomatic immunity or ‘Maori Rangers’;
- Common Law sheriffs;
- Fitness to stand trial;
- Perverting course of justice;
- ‘Legal’ documents suing Police Officers;
 - Remember to check for OIA requests or offences (e.g. threats).
- Mock trials threatening execution of public figures, finding the Government guilty of “crimes against humanity”.



Safety and security concerns?

The SovCit movement is not inherently violent, but individual SovCit adherents have been responsible for incidents of Politically-Motivated Violent Extremism (PMVE) overseas, primarily against law enforcement.

There is a realistic possibility that a threat actor inspired by SovCit rhetoric will commit a spontaneous act of extremist violence in New Zealand.



21. The theatre and its system of management through stage play/s, scripts, productions in the areas of the theatre of war, theatre of commerce, political theatre, street theatre, movie theatres, operating theatres, etc., are on notice.

21.1 All those responsible for creating all forms of theatre that cause harm and / or destroy people's lives, physically, spiritually or mentally, are (100%) one hundred percent liable for damages in their private and public capacity.

22. Forgiveness can be asked for as a public confession, and forgiveness can be given in the private and in the public.

22.1 You are commanded to forward this text / email to all of your colleagues associates family members etc.

23. Because so much damage has been done by way of barbarism, heinous crimes, insidious conduct, the death sentence will be sought by the Chief-Federal-Postal-Court-Judge, Muster-Master, Plenipotentiary-Judge & 13th of the 13th Month: [REDACTED]

Minister of Faith ordained by Section 7(2)(a) - Protection of Privacy
kin to Section 7(2)(a) - Protection of Privacy - Anglican Bishop.
British National Passport Number: [REDACTED] Bank-banker, [REDACTED]



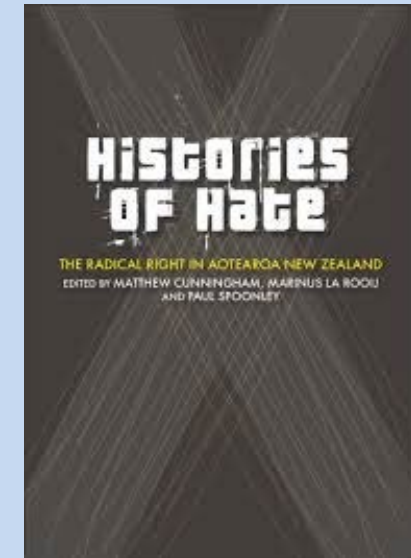
Key takeaways

- Some individuals thrive on the disruption caused by their actions. Try and minimize this as much as possible.
- These people are out there in your communities. They do not all present a risk – but it would pay to be cautious in your interactions with them.
- Encourage staff to take precautions to keep themselves safe – including locking down social media and removing themselves from electoral roll and RID.
- Don't let them change the way you interact with or inform people.
- Remember legitimate legal claims and requests can be buried amongst the pseudo-law.

- ❑ [Frivolous, vexatious and trivial: A guide to section 18\(h\) of the OIA and section 17\(h\) of the LGOIMA | Ombudsman New Zealand](#)
- ❑ Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG) and police's Security Intelligence and Threats Group.
- ❑ [Can you go on the unpublished roll? | Vote NZ](#)
- ❑ Contact your local Council to go on the Confidential Rating Information database (RID)

Articles:

- Harry Hobbs, Stephen Young and Joe McIntyre “**The Growth of Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand Courts**” [2023] NZLJ 6.
- Harry Hobbs, Stephen Young and Joe McIntyre, ‘**The Internationalisation of Pseudolaw: The Growth of Sovereign Citizen Arguments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand**’ (2024) 47(1) University of New South Wales Law Journal (forthcoming).





Pātai?





<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2023/10/video-kiwi-sovereign-citizen-reads-cop-his-rights-threatens-100-minute-fine-in-bizarre-encounter.html>