

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Transparency International New Zealand
Wellington New Zealand

New Zealand Attains Top Ranking in International Study of Budget Transparency

The International Budget Partnership today released the results of the 2012 Open Budget Survey. New Zealand ranked first among the 100 countries surveyed with an index of 92 out of a possible 100. This is an improvement in both rank and score since the 2010 release of the biennial report, when New Zealand was ranked 2nd with a score of 90.

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) is the only independent, comparative, and regular measure of budget transparency and accountability around the world. Produced by experts outside government, the 2012 Survey covers 100 countries — home to over 6 billion of the world's people.

The survey is based on 95 questions that assess the availability of eight key budget documents, as well as the comprehensiveness of the data contained in those documents. Most of the 100 countries in the sample are developing countries, and New Zealand is one of only six countries that are rated as providing extensive information to the public.

Transparency International New Zealand (TINZ) was responsible for the New Zealand assessment compiled and authored by Deputy Chair Murray Petrie.

One contribution to New Zealand's improved score was the regular reporting of tax expenditures — special tax breaks and concessions for favoured activities — in the annual budget documents.

NZ scored only moderately well in a new section of the 2012 OBS dealing with public engagement in the budget process. This section assesses the extent to which the three main institutions surveyed (executive, legislature, and supreme audit institution) provide spaces for public participation in budget processes. One important area of weakness in NZ is the lack of public debate and independent scrutiny of the Pre-Budget Statement.

TINZ is currently conducting an in-depth National Integrity Study of NZ, and the possibilities for increasing public participation in fiscal policy, and for strengthening legislative oversight, will be assessed in the NIS, with the final report and recommendations due in June 2013.

TINZ Chair Suzanne Snively Notes:

“The Open Budget Survey is yet another international testimonial to our public sector’s transparency. It is critical that we recognize that our leadership position is due to a long history of national vision and vigilance which must be maintained in order to sustain our international competitiveness and high quality of life.”

Full information on the CBPP study results, including the completed Questionnaire on New Zealand, is available at www.openbudgetindex.org

Notes to editors:

1. Media contacts:
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2. The [International Budget Partnership](#) is a group within the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) who’s mission is to collaborate with civil society to undertake budget analysis and advocacy in order to improve governance and reduce poverty. Neither organization relies on government funding.
3. For more information on the Open Budget Initiative contact info@internationalbudget.org or visit www.openbudgetindex.org. The Open Budget Initiative is based at the International Budget Partnership, 820 First Street NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002. (Tel.) +1-202-408-1080, (Fax) +1-202-408-8173.
4. Transparency International is the global civil society coalition leading the fight against corruption - <http://www.transparency.org/>.
5. Transparency International New Zealand, Inc is the local chapter of the global organisation - <http://www.transparency.org.nz/>.