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Good afternoon,

The Government has reached a major milestone in transforming New Zealand's planning system into one that makes it easier to build the houses and infrastructure we need, let farmers and growers get on with doing what they do best, and boost our primary sector while protecting the environment.

For too long, the Resource Management Act 1991 has acted as a handbrake on growth and opportunity. It is the root cause of many of our economic challenges. It has slowed energy and infrastructure projects, fuelled a housing crisis in a country with the land mass of the United Kingdom but with just five million people, and created enormous complexity and uncertainty for developers, councils, farmers and growers. It has not even protected the environment, with many environmental indicators degrading since 1991.

That is why today we introduced two new Bills which will create an entirely new regime premised on the foundations of successful liberal market economies, including strong and respected property rights. These Bills are:

- the Planning Bill – which focuses on enabling development and regulating how land is used; and
- the Natural Environment Bill – which focuses on managing the impacts from the use of natural resources and protecting the environment from harm.

Key features of the new planning system

This is a system designed to get New Zealand building again, to support our productive sectors, and protect the environment for future generations.

It strengthens property rights and restores the freedom of New Zealanders to use their land without undue restriction. Councils will be required to provide relief when imposing significant restrictions like heritage protections or significant natural areas. This is a much-needed rebalancing away from a system that allowed governments and councils to impose major costs on property owners without considering the impacts.

The new planning system will deliver significant economic benefits

These reforms are a cornerstone of the Government's Going for Growth economic strategy, which aims to lift productivity, reduce regulatory burdens and strengthen the foundations of long-term prosperity.

The new planning system is projected to boost GDP by an additional 0.56 per cent every year through introducing a more permissive, consistent and predictable system that unlocks investment, reduces delays and gives businesses confidence to plan and grow.

This is worth up to \$3.1 billion in extra economic growth annually by 2050, with benefits compounding over time. A cost benefit analysis shows \$13.3 billion in savings over 30 years through reduced administrative and compliance costs. These savings can be reinvested in growth, jobs, communities, and essential services rather than absorbed by bureaucracy.

This is what the new planning system will change for:

All New Zealanders who use the system

- A simpler, fairer system that respects people's time and provides certainty about what they can do on their own property.
- Nationally standardised rules and a modern digital platform that make it easier to find, understand and follow the rules.
- Fewer consents, faster decisions and a strong focus on the things that actually matter for communities and the environment.
- Clear opportunities for people to have their say at the points where it genuinely shapes outcomes.

Farmers and growers

- A planning system that backs our farmers to produce world-class food and fibre for New Zealand and the world, while caring for the land.
- Regulation that focuses on real environmental risks, not minor or low-impact activity, so farmers can spend more time on the land and less time on paperwork.
- Clear, consistent national rules that support long-term investment and give confidence to grow thriving rural businesses.
- Fair and practical relief when planning controls limit how land can be used, acknowledging the real economic and personal impact on farming families.

Homeowners and residential developers

- A planning system that supports the Kiwi dream of improving your home or building a new one without unnecessary cost or delay.
- Simple and consistent rules that make it easier to renovate, extend or build, with fewer consents needed for everyday projects.
- Spatial plans that ensure communities have room to grow, with more choice about where people can live close to jobs, services and opportunity.
- Heritage protection that focuses on places of genuine value while giving families the flexibility to adapt their homes for modern life.

Infrastructure providers and developers

- Certainty for the people building the roads, pipes, rail and energy systems that keep New Zealand moving.
- Faster decisions and fewer avoidable hurdles so major projects can get underway sooner and deliver benefits earlier.
- Early corridor protection and strong national direction so long-term infrastructure can be planned and delivered with confidence.
- Consistent rules across the country that reduce cost, support innovation and give investors the certainty they need.

Primary industries and resource users

- Recognition that responsible resource use underpins jobs, exports and regional prosperity.
- Clear environmental limits that are stable, evidence-based and provide confidence to innovate while looking after what matters.
- A fairer and more efficient approach to allocating scarce resources so they are used where they deliver the greatest benefit.

- Consents focused on genuine effects, giving businesses predictability and reducing unnecessary compliance cost.

Māori interests

- Provisions that commit the Crown to ongoing engagement with iwi on Treaty settlement redress, and a requirement for decision makers to give Treaty settlements the same or equivalent effect prior to those agreements being reached.
- A system that will provide clarity through national instruments and other planning documents about how Māori interests are considered and provided for, including in respect of significant sites.
- Clear legal requirements for Māori participation in the development of national direction, spatial plans and land use and natural environment chapters of regional plans.
- Protection for sites of significance to Māori and support for developing and protecting Māori land.

Transitioning to the new system

Consenting under the new system will begin shortly after the Bills become law, delivering immediate benefits to Kiwis before plans are completed.

We aim to have a first suite of national direction in place in 2026 to allow councils to inform spatial planning and transitional consenting. By 2029, we expect the system to be fully operational.

Providing feedback

We encourage New Zealanders to have their say on the legislation through the Select Committee process.

Further information

You can read our speeches on the Beehive website at:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/portfolio/nationalactnew-zealand-first-coalition-government-2023-2026/rma-reform>

You can find more information on the Ministry for the Environment website here:

<https://environment.govt.nz/news/government-unveils-major-overhaul-of-new-zealands-planning-system>.

Thank you for your interest and engagement on this important programme of planning reform.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Chris Bishop
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform



Simon Court
**Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform**