

10 February 2025

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Kia ora,

## **SUBMISSION ON THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (CONSENTING AND OTHER SYSTEM CHANGES) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Introduction**

1. The Dunedin City Council (DCC) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill (the Bill).
2. The DCC acknowledges the intention of the Bill is to make it quicker and simpler to consent renewable energy, boost housing supply, and reduce red tape for the primary sector.

### **Discussion**

3. The DCC supports several of the amendments proposed within the Bill but has some general and specific comments to make as follows.
4. The DCC notes that consultation has been limited and that the timeframe of this process has not enabled wide Council engagement ahead of making a submission.
5. The DCC is also concerned with the practicalities and costs of implementing these changes with the impending proposed changes to national directions and Phase 3 reforms. The DCC considers that more time for consultation with local government on the reform packages is required. In general, with the reform process, it also considers that more attention needs to be given to cost of change within the Resource Management framework and the challenges of implementation of national direction and other changes, particularly the tension between progressing changes to the RMA while also preparing for a replacement system. The cost of reform must be appropriately accounted and should consider the cost to local government of Environment Court processes that are triggered or made more complex when national direction is introduced with immediate effect when plan change processes are in progress. It is important that the reform process provides for a cost effective, smooth and lasting transition. The desirability for bi-partisan support for change to increase the chances of reform being lasting is emphasised.

### **Theme One: Infrastructure and Energy**

6. The DCC supports the default 35-year consent period for the duration of resource consents for renewable energy and long-lived infrastructure. While there are examples of long-lived infrastructure in the definition, the DCC considers that the minimum length of time that long-lived infrastructure is expected to last should be included e.g. 100 years.

## **Theme Two: Housing Growth**

7. The DCC supports the proposal to make implementation of the medium density residential standards (the MDRS) optional. Although Dunedin is not a tier 1 or specified tier 2 territorial authority under the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021 currently, this status may change in the future with internal migration as the effect of change on local climate encourages southward migration and the DCC would prefer to consider all residential density options that may be appropriate for Dunedin.

8. The Bill seeks to introduce new powers for the Minister for the Environment to ensure compliance with national direction and require councils to prepare plan changes to give effect to national direction.

9. The DCC supports the proposed amendments to the RMA to clarify the establishment, powers, functions, and duties of Streamlined Planning Process (SPP) panels, however, does not support the exclusion of elected members of local authorities from appointment to SPP panels. In our experience suitably qualified local authority councillors make valuable contributions to local planning decisions. Local authority councillors have a detailed knowledge of the territorial authorities' internal activity regarding city planning as well as delivery of critical infrastructure. The removal of elected officials from the SPP has an implication that the government does not respect or trust qualified local authority councillors. This is an unfortunate position, and we request that the select committee carefully consider their reasoning for excluding elected officials.

10. The DCC notes that the Bill proposes to enable the use of the SPP for applications for the delisting of heritage buildings. Dunedin values its cultural heritage as a vital part of its history and identity, its contribution to our communities' sense of place; and for the economic value it brings to our city from visitors and business (including the film industry). The DCC does not oppose the proposed change (provided these processes retain the ability of elected members to sit on these processes). The DCC considers that if this approach is taken, there is a need for clear guidance within the proposed National Direction for Historic Heritage about the criteria to be considered when making scheduling and de-scheduling decisions that appropriately reflect the economic and social value of heritage to communities whilst also providing for strategically significant projects that may be locationally restricted (for example in Dunedin – the New Hospital site required demolition of a scheduled heritage building).

## **Theme Three: Farming and Primary Sector**

11. The DCC has no comment on these proposed changes.

## **Theme Four: Natural Hazards and Emergencies**

12. The DCC strongly supports the proposed changes to enable councils to decline land use consents where there are significant natural hazard risks, and for new natural hazard rules

to have immediate legal effect from notification of a plan change. The alignment of language and definitions with the foreshadowed National Direction for Natural Hazards needs to be carefully considered. These changes are supported as the delay between identifying and documenting the risk from natural hazards and applying them through current planning processes can result in land use decisions being made without considering current natural hazard risk information.

#### **Theme Five: System Improvements**

13. The DCC supports the proposed changes to the compliance regime to deter offences, and other changes related to further information requests, applicants' ability to review consent conditions prior to a decision being issued, and the ability for council to recover costs when reviewing consents required because of a national direction.

#### **Implementation of National Planning Standards in an environment of change**

14. The DCC notes that the Bill does not address the implementation of the National Planning Standards in an environment of change, which the DCC is currently required to implement by May 2026. The DCC wrote to the Minister for RMA reform and the Minister for the Environment in June 2024 requesting that the requirement to implement the standards was suspended until after the Government's RMA reforms are completed. This is because the implementation as required by the planning standards will require a full or near-full review of the District Plan. The DCC considers that the costs of this exercise would be high with unknown benefits, especially if the planned reforms result in the standards being changed again. The DCC again respectfully requests that the requirement to implement the RMA national planning standards is suspended until after the completion of the RMA reforms. The costs and benefits of these standards should also be fully explored within the broader reform process.

#### **Summary**

15. The DCC appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill)

16. The DCC would welcome an opportunity to speak to this submission.

Kā mihi,

Councillor Sophie Barker  
**CHAIR, STRATEGY & ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE**