

5 August 2025

Hon Simon Court  
Parliament Under-Secretary to the Minister for Infrastructure  
Parliament Under-Secretary to the Minister responsible for RMA Reform  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington, 6160

By email: [Simon.Court@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Simon.Court@parliament.govt.nz)

Dear Simon

## **Engineering Leadership Forum – Resource Management National Direction**

Representatives of the Engineering Leadership Forum would appreciate a meeting with you to discuss our collective views on the Resource Management National Direction.

The Engineering Leadership Forum (ELF) comprises the Chief Executives of New Zealand's professional engineering associations: Engineering New Zealand, Association of Consulting and Engineering New Zealand, Water New Zealand, Civil Contractors New Zealand, Āpōpō Infrastructure Asset Management Professionals, the Electricity Engineers' Association, Concrete NZ, the Institute of IT Professionals NZ and a representative of the Royal Society. Together, we are the peak bodies representing the engineering profession in New Zealand.

We are broadly supportive of the proposed changes to streamline the resource management system, reduce complexity, and provide clearer national direction. These changes have the potential to enable faster consenting, reduce compliance costs and support more consistent infrastructure delivery. However, we also see further opportunities to strengthen the reforms - particularly in the way they connect with other major Government reforms across resource management, infrastructure, building, housing and water. Our key observations and recommendations are summarised in the attached Appendix.

We would like to meet with you to discuss these ideas and explore how the reforms can be best aligned to support the outcomes New Zealand needs.

Your sincerely



**Dr Richard Templer**  
Chief Executive

(on behalf of the Engineering Leadership Forum)  
cc Hon Chris Bishop, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport  
cc Hon Simon Watts, Minister for Local Government

# APPENDIX

## Themes across central Government reforms in environment, water, housing, building and infrastructure

### We recommend that the following occur:

- **Reform roadmap be developed**
  - Provide the sector with a roadmap of the key interconnected central Government reforms, which includes clear sequencing and interrelationships. A roadmap would help the sector engage with the Government's reform programme, and support planning, transition and implementation.
- **Bipartisan support is locked in**
  - Cement in a bipartisan vision and process for resolving differences across these key areas of reform. Continued uncertainty and change in regulatory mandates creates additional costs and impedes growth.
- **More thought to timing**
  - National Direction should be changed the same time as the legislation. The benefits of making these changes now are not significant enough to do them such a short time before the new Bills are expected to be introduced.
  - More time is needed to ensure an appropriate depth of analysis and sequencing for such a complex set of interconnected reforms. This would allow analysis of the systemic impacts of the changes rather than analysis of each proposal in isolation.
- **Implementation load needs to be reduced, particularly for local government**
  - Undertake further impact analysis and transition planning to ensure the Government's programme of reform is implementable.
  - For instance, local government will be on the receiving end of a huge array of reform – that will need time, resources and technical support to understand, design and implement. The current rate of change presents significant implementation risks.
- **More clarity on the future of local government**
  - Issue a clear vision and plan for the local government
  - Local Government is seemingly shifting from broad service delivery to focused core functions, stronger central oversight, and potentially streamlined regional structures - in a piecemeal way.
  - The new water entities, Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill, replacement resource management law and potential rationalisation of building control authorities – bring further change and complexity – without any integrated vision or plan.

## National Direction themes (packages 1-3)

### We recommend that the following occur:

- **Greater consideration of environmental impacts**
  - Create a sophisticated balance between development and the environment - that has tension on both sides so people can create sensible, innovative and cost-effective outcomes.

- We are great supporters of better enabling development, particularly infrastructure. However, this must be within the bounds of an appropriate environmentally sustainable regime.
- **Enhance the prominence of spatial planning**
  - Provide stronger, integrated spatial planning that enables the right things to be built in the right places at the right time.
- **Do not diminish Māori rights and interests**
  - Ensure the continued participation of iwi Māori, particularly for freshwater and undertake a review of the proposals to ensure alignment with Te Tiriti principles. The use of the phrase “Providing opportunities in “appropriate circumstances” for tangata whenua involvement...” is very concerning.
- **Make packages easier to understand and use**
  - Provide fewer, clearer national direction that are well integrated and easy to interpret, which either nicely segway to or coincide with the two new Acts (and its stated two National Direction).
  - Include practical examples that enable us to assess the impact the proposals and better engage.
  - Have a system view - each proposal seems to have been developed in isolation with no integration.
- **More consistent and aligned definitions needed**
  - Develop clearer definitions and tighten the drafting. The current vagueness could result in increased regional variation and cases being referred to the Environment Court, slowing everything up.
  - Improve alignment of definitions across linked reforms- such as infrastructure.
- **Keep up the drive towards National Standards**
  - Maintain the desire for a nationally consistent resource management framework, supplemented by practical, discipline-specific guidance. This requires the continued input of technical experts, and the use of lessons learnt.
- **Look to prioritise asset management**
  - Linking in with the draft National Infrastructure Plan, seek opportunities to strengthen and prioritise good asset management practices across the national direction to ensure we focus on getting the best out of existing infrastructure and have a plan to support the maintenance of new infrastructure.
  - This should include highlighting the importance of whole-of-life planning and ensuring maintenance and renewal works by asset owners are prioritised and funded.
  - Additionally, we would like to see the implementation of the national direction supported with capability development focused on building understand of good asset management processes (improving data quality and professional development).