



25 August 2022

Stuart Crosby
President
Local Government New Zealand
By email: president@lgnz.co.nz

Delivering successful resource management reform

Dear Stuart

Thank you for your letter of 8 August 2022 confirming broad support from Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) for the reform of the resource management system, and making recommendations on delivering it successfully.

I have heard a range of views about the reform from local government. I value engaging directly with and receiving advice from LGNZ, the Local Government Steering Group (LGSG), and local government generally. So do my officials at the Ministry for the Environment (MfE).

Rather than addressing each specific point in your letter, I think it helpful to respond more generally to its themes.

Transition to the new system

The success of the new resource management system (new system) will rely on getting the transition to it right, and I want to continue working with LGNZ and the LGSG on this. I am pleased the LGSG will also provide advice on the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Climate Adaptation Act (CAA).

I am aware that local government needs further detail on transition and implementation, particularly ahead of councils developing Long Term Plans. I have asked MfE to communicate this detail to you as soon as is practicable.

Local government, central government and Māori need to be adequately resourced to transition into the new system. The Government has committed \$178.7 million over four years to support transition and initial implementation.

You favour prioritising implementation of the Spatial Planning Act (SPA). The Government aims to have the SPA and Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) passed at the same time, with the legislative architecture providing for sequential preparation of the NPF, Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs), and then Natural and Built Environments Plans (NBA plans). This will ensure that RSSs (required under the SPA) will be operative before NBA plans.

We are also proposing a tranching approach to implementation that will see some regions proceeding through the transition before others, including a first tranche of 'model' regions. I would welcome advice from LGNZ and the LGSG on how best to determine which tranches regions will sit in.

Local voice

MfE has worked with the LGSG to ensure that local voice is heard and appropriately accounted for in the new system. I hope that local government will support the flexibility we propose to provide for composition of the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) and arrangements for the secretariats.

I agree that sub-regional planning – through sub-committees of RPCs – will be important for the successful development of the RSSs and NBA plans. Decisions on the scope, purpose and role of sub-committees or other working groups will be for RPCs to determine.

However, I have asked MfE for advice on whether there are circumstances where it may be appropriate for central government to be more directive on the formation of sub-committees. I agree with councils that we do not want to lose the expertise or progress being made under the freshwater planning process and the implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM).

Climate Adaptation Act

The Government intends to introduce the CAA by the end of 2023. We received useful feedback through the public consultation on the draft National Adaptation Plan and proposals for managed retreat. Many councils shared the work they are already doing to adapt to the impacts of climate change and the need for central government direction.

There are challenging issues involved in developing the CAA. MfE will be working through them over the coming months, and will engage with local government and other interests.

Lines of communication between central and local government

It is good that the local government sector sees value from central government's input to RSSs. Officials are continuing to work on central government's role, including how to co-ordinate input to RSSs. This role will be refined through central government's participation in developing the first tranche of RSSs in the model regions. Officials are also thinking about how best to share the planned location and timing of major central government investment.

You have asked that local government advisers be appointed to the interdepartmental Spatial Planning Act Board. Work is underway on how the Board will be established and run. I have asked officials to consider how local government could be represented on it.

I would appreciate having regular discussions with LGNZ as we move through the legislative process and the transition to the new system.

Yours sincerely



Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment

Cc: Susan Freeman-Greene (LGNZ), Grace Hall (LGNZ), Ranjani Ponnuchetty (LGNZ), Vicky Robertson (MfE) and Janine Smith (MfE)