



Submission on Better Regional Boundaries Bill

To the Governance and Administration Committee

24 June 2026

LGNZ supports the intent of the Bill

We agree with the explanatory note to this Bill that “regional New Zealand is currently served by a confusing web of overlapping, but differing, boundaries for different government departments or agencies”.

The Government has recently established the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport as a one-stop shop for local government. Without legislation of this nature though, local government and residents will continue to have to deal with a patchwork of different regional administrative areas for agencies like Police and MSD.

This Bill provides a useful framework to solve this issue, giving a reasonable 5-year period for government department and agencies to rearrange their administrative areas. Requiring the Public Service Commissioner to provide guidance at the start of the process is also very useful. It is also appropriate that LGNZ is consulted on this guidance, as the peak body for councils.

This is not the first time this issue has been attempted to be addressed. Given none of the previous non statutory processes have been successful, we support this legislative requirement and process being introduced.

To be enduring, the proposed process needs to align with the *Simplifying Local Government process*

Currently the five-year transition period overlaps with the Government’s timeline for local government reorganisation under its Simplifying Local Government reforms. During both the Head Start pathway and the backstop process there are opportunities for local government boundaries to change.

The Government has not yet made decisions on what the backstop process will look like, but it has indicated it will formally start post-2028 local elections. This means that there is a chance that boundaries will continue to change through the 2028-2031 local government triennium.

It does not make sense for agencies to be redrawing their boundaries in regions where there are questions about where local government boundaries will be. However, once a region’s local government arrangements and boundaries are confirmed, it will be the perfect time for central government departments and agencies to align themselves with these new boundaries that will hopefully be enduring.



We would recommend that the Committee considers how best to align this Bill with both the Head Start and backstop pathways in the Simplifying Local Government process. Some options include:

- build in a slightly longer transition period, so that work can begin promptly in 2027 once this Bill has passed to align administrative areas with regions that are confirmed as part of Head Start pathway in May 2027 but give agencies more time to align with regions subject to the backstop
- have a later commencement date but a shorter transition period, so that agencies have a bit more time to see the direction of local government reorganisation but to ensure that there is not an unnecessarily long period before there are better administrative boundaries
- give flexibility by allowing the Act to be brought into force by Order in Council, with a date sometime between 2028-2031 where it comes into force if not previously commenced by Order in Council.

There are wider opportunities for better alignment between central and local government

While not within scope of this Member's Bill, LGNZ want to support the objective of this legislation by noting several other opportunities for greater alignment between the work of central government and local government. Below are two such examples.

First, spatial planning as part of the new resource management system provides a great opportunity to support closer alignment across central and local government. We have called for central government and central government agencies to engage in the development of these plans, but also to align their work with them

Second, better aligning the timing of Government Policy Statement on Land Transport with the timing of the development and consultation by local government on Long-Term Plans, Regional Land Transport Plans, and Public Transport Plans is another opportunity. Current misalignment between these timings can delay the delivery of transport investment.