

RELATIONSHIP RESET AGREEMENT

Context

A strong partnership means that local and central government both achieve more for their communities. Achieving a strengthened partnership with central government will enable local government to achieve key policy outcomes. The upcoming general election is a key time to move our relationship forward.

The proposed elements of the ‘relationship reset’ will achieve this by providing for greater understanding and voice of local government in all the key decisions of central government. It will provide important opportunities to have local government’s voice around the table, achieve greater financial sustainability, and to strengthen our democracy.

We want all political parties to see this reset as important and to agree with implementing it.

Key elements of the relationship reset

Local government’s voice is at the table >

- // Central government and local government to develop an MoU to establish a way of working together for an enduring partnership.
- // The Minister of Local Government is inside Cabinet.
- // Central Government and Local Government Forums continue, with a meeting between key Cabinet Ministers and LGNZ’s National Council each year and subsequent meetings with each of the sectors and key ministers.

Financial sustainability >

- // Put an end to unfunded mandates. Regulatory Impact Statements quantify costs for councils, instead of only covering implications for central government.
- // Government considers new funding sources such as the Ratepayer Financing Scheme so councils have new and sustainable funding sources.

Strengthening our democracy >

- // Four-year terms for local government and central government.
- // Cabinet considers any reasonable measures to increase voter turnout in local government.
- // Government supports measures to improve the safety and security of local government elected members.

Policy priorities

This relationship reset will be accompanied by a list of local government’s policy priorities outcomes. It will set out the key things we would look to achieve through stronger partnership with central government.

This will be informed by conversations with sectors on their priorities and other recent work.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER >



01_

Resilient infrastructure that meets the needs of local communities.

Good infrastructure provides the foundation for thriving communities and a healthy economy. To increase the resilience of assets and reduce carbon emissions we need to adopt a strategic, long-term approach to planning and investment. This is also essential for striking the right balance between new developments and maintenance and renewals.

Key actions we want to see:

- // A partnership between the Ministry of Transport, Waka Kotahi and local government that closely involves councils in planning and investment decisions, including the development of the Transport GPS.
- // A cross-party commitment to transport planning and investment that goes beyond the three-year cycle to commit to long-term goals with appropriate levels of funding that will meet the needs of both rural and urban communities.
- // A legislative or regulatory mechanism for establishing city/regional deals so that services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively by councils where there are economies of scale.

02_

Active and empowered local government as a core enabler of community wellbeing.

As the layer of government closest to its communities, local government is best placed to work with citizens to develop local solutions at place and strengthen community wellbeing. To do this effectively and contribute to an active and inclusive local democracy, local government needs to have the right form, functions and funding.

Key actions we want to see:

- // A roadmap for implementing the recommendations that councils support from the Review into the Future for Local Government's final report in the short, medium, and long term.
- // The introduction of alternative funding and financing mechanisms for local government, including the Ratepayer Funding Scheme and a revenue-sharing model.
- // The Local Government Act 2002 updated to enable more direct and deliberative forms of participation, a more strategic planning framework to replace long term plans and strengthened Code of Conduct accountabilities.
- // A Local Government Centre of Excellence that promotes good practice and innovation across local government and delivers to many of the Future for Local Government Panel's recommendations.

03_

A Tiriti-based partnership between Māori and local government that delivers on improved intergenerational wellbeing for all.

Iwi/hapū and councils are both invested in intergenerational wellbeing through enhancing the mana of their communities and creating safe, healthy environments – they are natural partners. To strengthen this partnership, we need to make sure that both councils and iwi/hapū have the resource to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti at the local level.

Key actions we want to see:

- // A clear and consistent legislative framework across all statutes applying to local government's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi that directs councils how to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti.
- // Funding provisions to ensure that iwi/hapū have the capacity and capability to engage with central and local government, including the new requirements introduced through Resource Management reform.

04_

A national approach to climate adaptation mitigation and emergency management that enables local solutions.

The increasing frequency and impact of threats associated with a changing climate and natural hazards have made it clear that we must act now to increase the resilience of our communities. A joined-up approach from central and local government will be critical to prepare our regions, towns and cities for the impacts of a changing climate and to achieve an equitable transition.

Key actions we want to see:

- // An adaptation fund or funding mechanisms to enable adaptation and resilience of key assets as the Climate Adaptation Act is developed and implemented.
- // A permanent legislative framework for post event regulatory relief that could temporarily come into effect after emergencies.
- // A commitment to work with local government on addressing the complex legal and technical issues associated with managed retreat, and clearer direction on risk management in land use plans through an instrument like a National Policy Statement on Natural Hazards.

05_

A resource management system that protects the natural environment and enables development in the right places.

Resource management reform will fundamentally change the way that councils and communities make planning decisions about and shape their unique places. The local voice of communities must be part of spatial planning and land-use planning processes to protect and enhance the natural environment while also supporting urban development in the right places.

Key actions we want to see:

- // Councils and communities are given stronger influence over regional planning decisions to ensure they can contribute local knowledge to the decisions and plans that will shape their places.
- // Central government develops in partnership with local government and iwi/Māori a clear and achievable plan for implementation of the new resource management system that reflects existing capacity and capabilities.
- // Local government leads, in partnership with central government, the development of comprehensive guidance to support the implementation of the new resource management system that will provide greater clarity and reduce cost and complexity.