



## **NZPI MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Government Releases Spatial Planning and Natural and Built Environments Bills – NZPI / Te Kōkiringa Taumata**

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Government will release two bills today that will bring the greatest change in planning since the Resource Management Act in 1991. The New Zealand Planning Institute / Te Kōkiringa Taumata (the Institute) expect the Spatial Planning Act and the Natural and Built Environments Act to be the guiding legislation for future planning in Aotearoa.

“We’ve been waiting for this announcement. We’ve been actively engaged in this process for three years since the Randerson Panel was commissioned to review the RMA” says Reginal Proffit, Chair of the Institute’s board. “We’re facing change on a global scale responding to climate change and natural disasters, the supply of affordable housing and infrastructure, and meaningful partnership under Te Tiriti. This is our opportunity to get right what hasn’t worked as was hoped under the RMA.”

NZPI CEO David Curtis says “as practitioners who are responsible for the implementation of the legislation, we are in support of reform, based on the information that has been shared to date. We are ready to look closely at the detail and consider what the new legislation will mean for planning practice and implementation. Regulatory reforms are important, but the challenge for planners is bridging the gap between policy and practice.”

“NZPI is disappointed that the Climate Adaptation Act is not being introduced to Parliament alongside these two bills. Better preparing for adaptation to climate change and risks from natural hazards, and better mitigation of emissions contributing to climate change, is one of the five objectives for reform set by the Government and a key aspect of achieving this is still unknown. We expect to see the Spatial Planning Bill include a requirement to identify areas vulnerable to climate change in regional spatial strategies. This is a good start. We hope that the additional time being taken to develop the Climate Adaptation legislation will result in a comprehensive and transformational Bill.”

The Institute supports the move from an effects-based system to an outcomes-based system for resource management in New Zealand, and says it has the potential to be an aspirational and forward-looking planning approach. “It shifts the focus to the future and how we can achieve positive outcomes. This will allow us to be more purposeful and specific in the way we manage development and the environment and will help achieve the Government’s objectives for the Reform.”

The new bills place te ao Māori and Pakeha concepts clearly and firmly alongside each other, and NZPI is really encouraged by this. The legislation refers specifically to Te Oranga o te Taiao, a Māori concept that incorporates the health of the natural environment, the intrinsic relationship between iwi and hapū and te taiao, the interconnectedness of all parts of the natural environment, and the essential relationship between the health of the natural environment and its capacity to sustain all life.

This will go some way to achieving the Government's reform objectives focused on providing greater recognition of te ao Māori and protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Spatial planning is relatively new to planning legislation in Aotearoa. Strategic spatial planning looks to the future. It plans where infrastructure should go, which areas of land should be protected from development, and which areas should be identified for growth. This is an opportunity to identify the big issues around infrastructure, housing supply and what areas are vulnerable to sea level rise and an increase in natural disasters, all in a strategic and integrated way that is specific to each region.

"But how well the spatial planning proposals achieve the Government's objectives for reform will depend on the detail in the Spatial Planning Bill. The visibility of this Bill has been very poor. There needs to be strong national strategic direction alongside regional-level spatial planning, such as through a national spatial strategy, and we are yet to see if this will eventuate."

The new system puts more emphasis of getting things 'right' in plans, rather than leaving big decisions to case-by-case consent application assessments. The Institute supports this. "An emphasis on plan development should provide more certainty in the system, making it easier to enable the right sort of development and protect the environment, both objectives of reform. However, another Government objective is to retain appropriate local democratic input to this process, and this is a challenge with the new bills regionalising planning and reducing appeal rights. We will review the detail to ensure the right balance is achieved.

"We will also be reviewing changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system (another Government objective), particularly the resource consent part of the system." While the Institute agrees that the changes proposed to the current consenting system should make it less complex, more could be done to make it less adversarial and less focused on process over outcomes.

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