

Committee Secretariat: Environment Committee
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17 November 2025

Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill

Thankyou for this opportunity to respond to the proposed Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill.

I oppose the proposed Bill.

We need regulation and legislation that protects New Zealand's resources, our whānau, and future generations. This Bill is obfuscating and undemocratic; it disempowers people and puts the environment, including our lands and oceans and all that lives in or on them, at risk.

It is misleading and disingenuous to frame the purpose of the Bill primarily as a measure to improve competition in the grocery sector (by providing for this to be taken into account when a referral decision is being made). Grocery competition is a very minor component of the Bill.

Clause 5 of the Bill proposes that a new Government Policy Statement (GPS) can be issued by the Minister for Infrastructure (Minister) to specify policies about the 'regional or national benefits' of certain types of projects. The effect of this proposed amendment is to provide the Minister with an opportunity to dictate that certain projects have regional or national benefits. This removes testing of a project's benefits by submitters and independent expert panels.

In addition, a GPS could remove the need for an application to undertake a cost benefit analysis, which is necessary to determine the full impacts of a project on society. Instead, applicants may be able to rely on Economic Impact Assessments, which merely confirm things like employment opportunities and financial returns, with no consideration of environmental, social, cultural or other costs.

There are no parameters around what a GPS can say and how it is prepared, other than a requirement to consult with relevant portfolio Ministers. The ability to issue a GPS has been dropped into the Bill without guardrails. It confers significant discretion on the Minister to determine what projects are eligible to proceed to panels, and to influence the outcome of those panel decisions. Public consultation would not be required.

Under clause 9, the time in which comments on a referral application must be provided would be reduced from 20 working days to 15 working days. This provides very little time for meaningful comment from the limited range of bodies from which comment must be sought. The condensed timeframes will adversely affect the quality of information provided, and the decisions made.

In terms of legislative process, the timeframe of 7 working days for public submission on the Bill represents a further erosion of the democratic process and is likely to result in errors in the Bill not being fixed.

Community and environmental groups form are integral to our democratic processes. Cutting them out of the fast-track submission process appears to be driven by a desire to override local voices in favour of the interests of large overseas companies. This is wrong.

Ngā mihi nui,

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