

Submission to

the

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (CONSENTING AND OTHER
SYSTEM CHANGES) AMENDMENT BILL**

from the

Employers and Manufacturers Association

February 2025



About the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA)

Established in 1886, the EMA is New Zealand's largest business association representing more than 7,000 businesses in the upper half of the North Island. Combined, our members are responsible for employing at least 20% of the country's workforce.

We are the unapologetic voice of the business community, advocating strongly on behalf of our members and the wider business community to ensure their voices are heard by government and decision-makers. In collaboration with our nationwide network, including BusinessNZ, Business Central, Business Canterbury and Business South, we represent and support over 76,000 member companies.

As a not-for-profit association, we provide trusted, expert and affordable advice to our members. Delivering a wide range of services, including learning and training courses, health and safety advice, employment support, and HR and PX services, we support our members to upskill and build capability in their teams.

More broadly, we aim to create an ecosystem of support for all businesses in New Zealand, enabling them, their people and their communities to prosper.

Contact

For further contact regarding this submission:

Alan McDonald

Head of Advocacy, Strategy and Finance
Employers and Manufacturers Association
Private Bag 92-066
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Mobile: +64 27 809 4398

E-mail: alan,mcdonald@ema.co.nz

Introduction

The EMA largely supports the changes proposed in the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill (“the Bill”) and recommends that the Bill proceeds.

The current Government’s objectives to simplify and speed up the consenting process are long overdue and the EMA has been a long-time campaigner for the need for change.

Together with Business NZ, Infrastructure NZ and Property Council NZ, the EMA formed a Resource Management Reform Group that has campaigned together, for change, for several years.

That group continues as reference for the Ministry for the Environment and largely continues to support changes outlined in the current Amendment Bill and the ongoing work in Phase 3, developing a new consenting system.

The EMA’s support is based on a new consenting regime enabling more efficient, less costly and faster consenting. When that is in place, it should be accompanied by a twilight clause that removes the need for both the current Fast-Track Consenting Regime and the changes proposed in these Amendments.

Neither the Amendment Bill or the Fast-Track should be required if the new Phase 3 consenting regime achieves its goals.

The EMA is also supportive of suggestions in submissions from Property Council and Business NZ.

Infrastructure and Energy

Setting the default timeframe at 35 years for consent for energy projects is supported by the EMA and we’d also support an even longer timeframe if a mechanism was also put in place to review effects and mitigations at regular intervals. That would ensure regular monitoring of those conditions and collection of invaluable data – a step often missing or overlooked in the current consenting regime.

Energy infrastructure often takes many years to recoup its ROI at the back end of a consenting period rather than as an immediate return. For example, it can be up to 30 years or more before investment in new transmission starts to make balance sheet significant returns.

Extending that default to all long-lived infrastructure is also a good step although some definition of what constitutes long-lived infrastructure would be required.

While Ports are dealt with separately in the Amendment Bill, Ports would also be an example of long-lived infrastructure that could be included in a default 35-year consenting regime.

Including inland ports in requiring authority status is a positive step.

Housing Growth

While not questioning the ability of councils to opt out of MDRS if they demonstrate they have 30 years of housing growth capacity, a time limit needs to be imposed on demonstrating that capacity.

Currently, many councils are seeking exemptions for completing plan changes and the uncertainty that creates is slowing growth in housing.

We are also very supportive of ensuring compliance with National Standards as many of the current consenting issues are caused by councils layering their own interpretations over existing consent legislation, or worse, creating their own standards that are higher compliance levels than national guidelines.

For example, a change to flood zones in Auckland trapped an applicant for a significant development in no man's land when the council changed its flood zone after the applicant was most of the way through an application.

Sudden changes to freshwater standards also nearly halted quarrying development as local authorities refused to grant consents for land that was already in use for quarrying.

The EMA also supports making it easier to remove heritage status where appropriate, especially where the costs of maintaining or upgrading a heritage building is well beyond the value of that site for other uses.

Natural Hazards

A definition or National Standard would be useful for local authorities in deciding what constitutes a significant natural hazard.

It should also be recognised that good planning and design can mitigate all but that worst unforeseen natural hazards.

Designing a national system for deciding compensation for compulsory acquisitions following a major event – such as the Auckland or Napier floods – would also be helpful.

Wood Processing

Certainty around timeframes for consenting new processing facilities will help with investment in this sector but a further step could be taken to assist with the expansion on existing facilities, which also often require a consent, even when the expansion is on an existing site.

These sites are already subject to discharge regulations and generally fall under hazchem regulations as well.

Given the consents and regulations are already in place more certainty could also be given to expansion consenting timeframes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.