

# MEDIA RELEASE

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07 March 2024

## Government Releases Fast Track Approvals Bill – Te Kōkiringa Taumata | New Zealand Planning Institute

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Government has released a Fast Track Approvals Bill today, intended to provide fast, one-stop-shop approvals for infrastructure and major projects across seven different pieces of legislation, including the Resource Management Act 1991. The bill is part of the coalition agreement between National and NZ First and is a key component of the Government's 100 Day Plan.

NZPI / Te Kōkiringa Taumata represents over 3,000 planning and resource management professionals in Aotearoa. Our response to new legislation is through an implementation lens. The implications of this bill appear to be significant and wide ranging for resource management practitioners and NZPI will scrutinise the bill very carefully.

"We have said previously that we need a planning system that enables innovative and creative ways to overcome the issues facing New Zealand, rather than acting as a roadblock, and that the right balance needs to be struck between a fair process and timeliness of decision-making. The Fast Track Approvals Bill may significantly cut 'red tape' for major projects, but there is nuance in implementing such expansive legislation. The Institute is concerned that we may see poor environmental and long-term economic outcomes if priority is given to short-term economic benefits over other related and equally important criteria for New Zealand Inc. What we do look forward to, is continuing our conversations with Government on the scope and scale of the bill so that the right balance between finding efficiency and achieving good outcomes can be met." says Megan Couture, NZPI Deputy Chair.

The Bill's purpose is to provide a fast-track decision-making process that facilitates the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits. Unlike the previous Covid 19 Recovery (Fast Track Consenting) Act 2020, its purpose does not currently include promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

The Bill states that a project is not ineligible just because the project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991. This is something that the Institute would like to investigate further as an activity would have been prohibited following a robust and democratic process. We have also seen that while Ministers will consider whether a project will support adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards, it is not clear whether there would be further consideration of whether a project is in a location that is actually or potentially subject to natural hazards. Again, this is a matter that NZPI would like to better understand.

The Bill outlines a process for the responsible Minister to refer other projects for acceptance into the fast-track process where they will be considered by an Expert Panel. NZPI CEO David Curtis says "there are a limited number of "experts" in New Zealand who are sufficiently qualified to make technical and complex decisions that traverse legislation that covers the environment, conservation, mining and minerals, transport and infrastructure. With over 100 projects expected to be considered for Schedule 2 of the new bill, our concern is for resourcing in the profession".

NZPI will be examining the Bill closely in the coming weeks and expects to be fully engaged in the select committee process.

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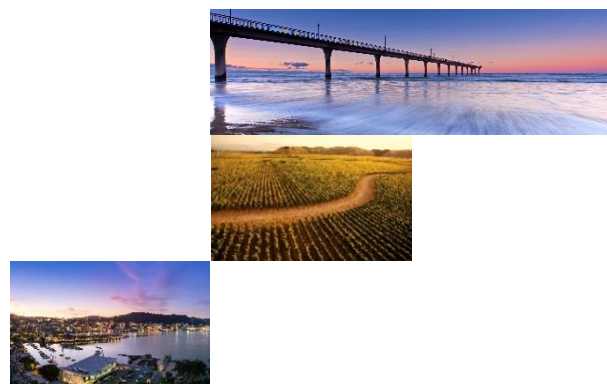
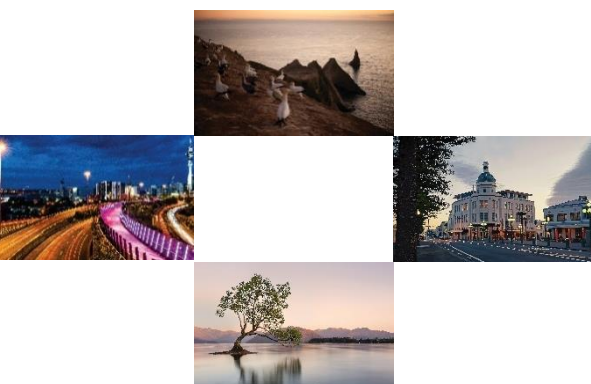
*The Institute is available for comment. For more information please contact:*

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## Note to media:

- Established in 1949, NZPI / Te Kōkiringa Taumata has more than 3000 members involved in strategic planning initiatives and implementation of urban and rural plans.
- NZPI members work in cities, towns, district councils and rural areas and specialise in a variety of different disciplines – for example transport, urban design or conservation.



## *Planning is essential for a better New Zealand*

Te Kōkiringa Taumata | New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) is the voice of planning in New Zealand. It is the professional organisation representing this country's planners, resource managers, urban designers, and environmental practitioners. Planners have a critical role in shaping New Zealand's future by helping to develop solutions to key issues, such as population growth, infrastructure needs, pressure on natural resources and environments, demographic change and transport.



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