

Media Statement
19 August 2009

Proposed RMA amendments for infrastructure well balanced

"The report back yesterday from the select committee on the Resource Management Act Reform Bill recommends a sensible and balanced approach to streamlining consent processes for significant infrastructure projects", says Stephen Selwood, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development.

"Particularly pleasing was the committee's recommendation that the Environment Minister may take into account network utility operations that cross district council boundaries when considering call-in of major projects. The Bill as originally drafted had only provided for consideration of network utilities that cross more than one regional council boundary. This was a very narrow definition which would only have included network utilities like national roads, railway lines and electricity transmission lines.

"The committee recommended a broader approach be adopted to enable the Minister to consider calling in proposals that would assist the Crown meet its obligations in regard to public health, welfare, security or safety. This means that worthwhile projects such as water treatment plants, waste facilities, prisons and national or regional facilities like hospitals, schools and universities might also be considered for call in.

"These changes signal the Government's recognition that it is not only bottlenecks in network utilities like roads, rail and transmission that hold back national development but also the need for investment in social infrastructure including schools, hospitals, universities, courts, prisons and essential infrastructure such as water treatment and storage facilities and waste facilities. Not only does investment in this kind of infrastructure have an immediate pay-back in terms of jobs and skills development, they are integral to developing and growing communities and raising living standards.

"NZCID is looking forward to the phase two reforms where further positive process changes to advancing projects of national significance can be developed".