

POLITICS (/NEWS/POLITICAL)

Government to give itself power to override councils on housing in RMA changes

9 minutes ago



Chris Bishop Photo: RNZ / Mark Papalii

The government will take back power from local councils if their decisions are going to negatively impact economic growth, development or employment.

In a speech to business leaders at the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, Housing and RMA reform minister Chris Bishop has announced Cabinet will insert a new regulation power into the Resource Management Act.

Before a minister can use the power they would have to investigate the provision in question, check whether it is consistent with the national direction under the RMA, and engage with the council.

Bishop expected the power to only be necessary until the new planning system was in place, but said it was necessary when councils used their power to stop growth.

Bishop on Wednesday released a discussion document on how proposed housing rule changes would work in with the government's resource management reforms (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/562530/sweeping-rma-changes-for-housing-freshwater-infrastructure-rules-proposed>).

"Next year we'll replace the RMA with a new planning system that makes it easier to plan and deliver the housing and infrastructure New Zealand needs.

"The new planning system is an enormous opportunity to create a planning system that enables and encourages housing growth," Bishop said.

The document provided more details on six planned law changes:

- The establishment of Housing Growth Targets for Tier 1 and 2 councils

- New rules making it easier for cities to expand outwards at the urban fringe

- A strengthening of the intensification provisions in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD)

- New rules requiring councils to enable a greater mixed-use zoning across cities.

- The abolition of minimum floor area and balcony requirements

- New provisions making the Medium Density Residential Standards optional for councils.

Last month ministers released proposed sweeping changes to rules covering councils' oversight (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/thedetail/556754/reforming-the-reforms-the-rma-is-up-for-debate-again>) for public consultation.

Under the proposed Resource Management Act changes, granny flats of up to 70sqm, and papakāinga of up to 10 homes

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/562530/sweeping-rma-changes-for-housing-freshwater-infrastructure-rules-proposed>) would be allowed without a consent on specific land zones.

Papakāinga would also allow commercial activities of up to 100sqm, conservation activity, accommodation for up to eight guests, along with education, health, sports, marae, urupā and māra kai facilities. Medium papakāinga of up to 30 homes would be considered a "restricted discretionary" activity, with those of more than 30 units becoming "discretionary" activities.

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