

Environment Select Committee
(submitted through the online portal)

13 February 2026

RE: Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill

Who we are

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) is an Incorporated Society and a peak body for the community housing sector. To achieve our Vision of ‘all New Zealanders well-housed’, we have a strategic focus on supporting a responsive housing system underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Right to a Decent Home. We are also mindful of the broader institutional and regulatory context within which our members and other community organisations operate.

Our 103 member organisations provide homes for over 30,000 people nationally across 26,000 homes and our partner members include developers, consultants and local councils. Our member community housing organisations are primarily registered Charities or not for dividend entities that develop, own and/or manage social and affordable housing stock, with a variety of tenure offerings. We have 63 registered Community Housing Provider members.

CHA is a proud Tangata Tiriti organisation and works closely with national Māori housing advocate Te Matapihi, that represents iwi-based and Māori community housing organisations.

Introduction

Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill, introduced together as the foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand’s new resource management system.

Homes are the foundation for whānau and community wellbeing. Unfortunately, for too long we have not delivered homes meeting the need for affordable and accessible homes for large segments of our population. The Resource Management Act is identified as one of the barriers that has contributed to this failure to adequately house our neighbours. However, it is not the only constraint and simply removing identified planning constraints is not sufficient to ensure all New Zealanders are well-housed.

CHA is **supportive in principle** of reforming the RMA and creating a simplified planning framework. We support the ambition to create an integrated, outcomes-driven planning system. However, we submit that without **stronger direction, explicit housing targets, mandated assessments, and implementation tools**, the Bills risk continuing the systemic failure to deliver genuinely affordable homes for low- to moderate-income whānau.

The Bills **do not yet provide a complete or actionable pathway** for improving housing affordability. Although they reference enabling development within environmental limits and improving housing supply, affordability, and choice, they stop short of mandating the mechanisms necessary to ensure delivery.

Without changes, the Bills may deliver *more homes*, but not *more genuinely affordable homes*, especially in high-cost regions and communities facing entrenched disadvantage.

This submission provides our thoughts on how to achieve the vision stated in the recently updated Government Policy Statement on Housing & Urban Development of "*Everyone in New Zealand lives in a home and within a community that meets their needs and aspirations*".

Housing Affordability Must Be an Explicit and Measurable System Outcome

The Bills acknowledge the importance of housing supply, affordability, and choice, but the drafting remains high-level and non-directive. There are opportunities to strengthen the system to deliver on the vision of the GPS – HUD.

CHA recommends:

1. **Include housing affordability as a mandatory system outcome** in both Bills, requiring measurable progress.
2. **Require regional spatial plans and land use plans to include:**
 - quantified housing need projections,
 - affordable housing targets, and
 - evidence-based policy interventions.

CHA calls for embedding **Housing Needs Assessments** (HNAs) within the planning system. These should be the foundation for the regional spatial plans and the land use plans, informing the decisions which will shape development activities and our communities for generations.

These assessments should:

- identify existing and projected unmet housing needs,
- specify income-based affordability thresholds,
- assess social and affordable rental needs,
- differentiate regional and community needs,
- and integrate iwi and Māori housing aspirations.

Enabling Inclusionary Housing (IH)

CHA and other organisations, including Local Government New Zealand, have repeatedly identified *Inclusionary Housing (IH)* as a vital policy tool missing from the legislative framework. These Bills provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to utilise a proven and effective tool to deliver long term affordable homes meeting the needs of lower income households which the private market cannot and will not adequately serve. We encourage the government to move

beyond general references to affordable housing without mechanisms to deliver it and enable a proven mechanism that has worked in Queenstown Lakes District for nearly two decades.

As evidenced by the inability of other local authorities to adopt additional inclusionary housing programmes, the Planning Bill needs to enable this nationally. Aligned with the overall intent of the Bills to standardise zones, reduce complexity and provide greater certainty, embedding this now is critical.

Regulatory Relief

We are concerned that the broad reach of the language regarding requirements for local authorities to compensate for applying reasonable limits on the utilisation of land through their planning processes. The potential for challenges to local authorities on routine matters seems likely to increase under the proposed approach. We think that ratepayers should not be subject to providing compensation for the local authority processes seeking the best planning and environmental outcomes for their community

Conclusion

CHA appreciates the intent behind the Planning Bill and Natural Environment Bill and acknowledges the substantial work undertaken to simplify and modernise the planning framework.

However, without explicit, enforceable mechanisms to deliver genuinely affordable housing—and without embedding Housing Needs Assessments, inclusionary tools, and clear obligations on planning committees—these Bills risk repeating the shortcomings of the RMA system they replace.

CHA urges the Committee to adopt our recommendations so the new planning system can deliver: **a well-functioning, fair, sustainable, and affordable housing system for all communities in Aotearoa.**

We thank you for the opportunity to submit on this consultation and request the opportunity to present at the hearings on these Bills.

Ngā mihi



Paul Gilbert

Chief Executive

Community Housing Aotearoa – Ngā Wharerau o Aotearoa