

20 May 2025

Policy Unit
National Emergency Management Agency
PO Box 5010
Wellington 6140

Teena koutou katoa,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Emergency Management Bill. Waikato District Council (Council) acknowledges the significant work that has been undertaken to develop the discussion document and the thoughtful approach to reforming and strengthening an essential part of New Zealand's risk management system.

This submission is supplementary to the feedback that has been provided by the Waikato Region Emergency Management Group, in which Council is a member organisation.

Waikato District sits within the northwestern part of the Waikato Region. It borders Auckland in the north, wraps around Hamilton City and Waipa in the south. It contains west coast beaches including Port Waikato and Whaaingarua Harbour, significant parts of the Waikato and Waipaa rivers and the Whangamarino Wetland. We are a rural and provincial district council with a number of isolated rural communities spread across our district

Council's intention is to support the development of a more cohesive, effective and sustainable emergency management system for New Zealand.

Issue 9: Strengthening local hazard risk management

Council supports stronger integration of hazard and risk management into local and regional emergency planning. However, this goal cannot be achieved through emergency management legislation alone. Local authorities are often constrained by requirements in other legislation (including the Resource Management Act and the Building Act) that make it difficult to act decisively on known hazard risks. There needs to be more acknowledgement of these interlinkages and minimising development and occupation of hazardous areas and looking to retire these areas as risk levels increase over time.

Council recommends that the reform programme includes an assessment of cross-legislative alignment to ensure that emergency management objectives are supported and not hindered by related planning and regulatory frameworks.

Linking recovery with adaptation and long-term resilience

Council recommends that recovery is treated as a pathway to adaptation. This means using recovery as a deliberate opportunity to reduce future vulnerability, to invest in resilient infrastructure, and to improve systems and services. To achieve this, adaptation principles must be embedded into recovery arrangements from the outset. Appropriate funding from all levels of government (national/regional and local) is accessed to build back better and improve resilience of these areas.

Council recommends that the legislation links recovery planning with adaptation and risk management strategies at both regional and local levels, as well as requiring reviews of recovery outcomes to inform future planning and investment. Supporting documentation and technological solutions should be investigated to provide guidance on integrating recovery with long-term planning and climate risk at the forefront.

Conclusion

Council is broadly supportive of the intent behind the reform and acknowledges the significant opportunity to improve emergency management in New Zealand. Council believes that by aligning our legislative, planning and policy frameworks, we can ensure a more coordinated and proactive response to hazard risk, and reduce future vulnerability. This is a timely opportunity to achieve alignment across related enabling legislation to achieve system-wide change. A healthy emergency management system must be well integrated across all levels and have the strength and flexibility to drive meaningful, long-term changes.

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact Kelly Newell - Resilience Manager by email kelly.newell@waidc.govt.nz.

Ngaa mihi,



Jacqui Church
Mayor