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**SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT ON URBAN
DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY**

I do not support the proposed NPS-UDC.

Reasons:

1. Market demand approach

The proposed NPS assumes land supply is the main cause of the national housing shortage.

This is only partially true, and applies only to parts of NZ where there is high 'demand', and indeed the whole approach is demand-led, as opposed to any measures to reduce demand or re-direct it to areas where there is no shortage e.g. restricting immigration and regional development policy.

The approach is very much market-led, but the market is known to be a very imperfect policy tool as it is based on individual benefit (as opposed to social benefit), and encourages land banking.

Decision sought: Delete Policy OD2, Policy PA1 bullet 2(in part re scarcity) and bullet 3

2. Suitability of land for urban development

The definition of Development Capacity requires councils to take into account the zoning, objectives, policies, rules and overlays that apply to the land but there may be a conflict between increased urban development and the planning provisions which are based on sound resource management principles such as avoiding significant natural hazards (including areas likely to be affected by sea level rise) and other significant resources such as outstanding natural landscapes and significant biodiversity.

Geographically, not all parts of New Zealand have suitable land for urban development. In many parts of the country, natural hazards are a constraint to urban development e.g. areas prone to earthquakes, volcanic activity, floods and landslides. Encouraging urban development in these areas significantly increases the costs for foundations and structural requirements, and exposes the public to unnecessary costs of insurance.

One of the most significant constraints is the threat posed by rising sea levels. There is a considerable demand for coastal living, but to provide for this demand is actually foolish and exposes a 'it won't happen in my lifetime' head in the sand approach.

In some areas developing urban areas is energy inefficient because it requires significant commuting when there is a lack of public transport. The city of Calgary in Canada is taking steps to avoid further sprawl, even though there is plenty of suitable land to spread out, because of the distance and cost of travel to work.

In other areas, urban development threatens significant indigenous biodiversity e.g the Waitakere Ranges or around kiwi populations in Kerikeri and Whakatane.

The NPS does absolutely nothing to address any of these constraints and rather sets up a conflict between enabling growth (as opposed to managing it) and sound management principles.

The definition of Secondary Urban Area, means that Ohope Beach, which is subject to considerable coastal hazards (sea level rise, flooding streams and landslides), should provide for increased residential development, as for a few weeks over summer, the population reaches 30,000. This makes no rational sense.

In Whakatane District urban growth studies have shown there is little available land contiguous with the existing urban area that is suitable for housing in particular, because of real hazards from flooding, sea level rise and landslide. The Council has put a lot of resources into growth studies, and should not be penalised or forced to provide land in inappropriate locations. Requiring small councils to provide development land 15-20% greater than even aspirational growth rates is just foolish.

Decision sought

Ensure that the provision of land for urban development is subject to Part 2 of the Act, and specify constraints such as natural hazards should take precedence.

3. Cost

Implementing the proposed NPS will be very costly to councils and require an increase in bureaucracy, as councils will need to become experts in commercial feasibility. From all points of view, this seems an inappropriate approach and ill-fits with government's philosophy of market-led policy. If the market is not providing the required urban development (it isn't), councils, funded by ratepayers, are not the bodies to commerciality.

In addition, it has been long-argued, (correctly in my view) that councils (and governments) should not "pick winners", which they will be required to do under this policy i.e. what is the most "*Feasible*" [means the commercial viability of development, taking into account the current likely costs, revenue and yield of developing.]

Decision sought

Delete the concept of feasibility and revert to the now long-standing current RMA approach of sustainable management.

4. Public participation

Provisions e.g. Policy PD4 directing regional councils to amend their RPS without public debate is wrong. Communities should have the opportunity to work through growth issues, and in my experience as a planner, this has worked well e.g. Tauranga's Smartgrowth programme. Provisions such as this undermine a basic premise of the RMA that those affected by development should have a voice.

Decision sought

Delete provisions directing changes to an RPS without a Schedule 1 process.