

## Submission on NPS on Urban Development Capacity

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My submission is based on my experience living and working in the Queenstown Lakes District and is primarily concerned with the future of this area.

- Impression after first read: Dr Nick Smith cannot viably be both Minister for Building and Housing, and Minister for the Environment. His Message and the underlying theme of the document is to enable and promote growth and development with only cursory concern for both the physical natural environment and the living environment, or habitat, of the residents. Dr Smith appears to have lost the balance between his portfolios. This can be summed up by Dr Smith's own statement: 'This policy requires councils and the Environment Court to put greater weight on the national importance of sufficient land supply for housing and business growth'.
- It is unclear whether The Policy Statement is referring to just Queenstown or the Queenstown Lakes District. From reading is doubtful the writers are familiar with this part of New Zealand. Although Wanaka town-ship is well below the fresh-hold of the population required to be specifically included, it is very much involved with the same issues of a very high rate of growth and very expensive land and house prices.
- The Policy is over simplistic. It is attempting to apply a 'one size fits all' approach. The resort areas are totally different from other cities. The reasons for people choosing to live in the Queenstown Lakes District are vastly different from those choosing to reside in a North Island metropolis. The Policy fails to reflect these differences.
- Despite Dr Smith's stating 'This policy is carefully nuanced to the different growth pressures', it in fact fails to recognise that the growth pressures experienced in the Queenstown Lakes are not just natural growth, but are significantly driven by voluntary internal NZ migration combined with foreign ownership. Perhaps there should be a moratorium on purchasing by non-residents or New Zealand passport holders.

- The future success of the Queenstown Lakes District as a tourist destination relies on protecting the stunning physical environment; protecting a clean and healthy lifestyle, easy access to the district and then easy access to the area's attractions. The Policy fails to recognise this and simply emphasises trying to provide housing for whoever wishes to live in the area.
- The Policy implies that councils and planners have failed to understand the relationship between demand, supply and pricing. When related to the Queenstown Lakes District this shows it is the writers who lacks an understanding of the dominant dynamics of our market. Here demand is always incredibly high.  
The goal of living in this region, and/or to own a property here for holiday or investment is very high on many peoples wish list.  
In the Queenstown Lakes District many properties are bought as a discretionary item.  
If prices were to drop then demand would further sky rocket driving an unmanageable demand on infrastructure and destroy the point of difference that is part of the success of the region as a tourist destination  
How can a council predict the true demand when it is clouded by external factors beyond that of natural reproductive growth?  
It is very easy to create another congested and tacky tourist resort; but it is hard to protect one from remote bureaucrats who fail to recognise the value of protecting the core of the attraction.
- The Policy is simple and flawed in believing a 20% surplus of zoned land will lower prices. This would apply if the suitably zoned land was owned by developers who wished or needed to proceed forthwith with subdivision. The policy fails to recognise, for example, the rights and wishes of historical family ownership of farmland.  
The Policy also fails to acknowledge developers who have the financial ability to play a "long game. That is, they can wait for the right time to maximise their returns. Stage releases of vacant sections are done in a manner so as not to compete with themselves by flooding the market or when there is already a selection of similar vacant sections available. For example Wanaka has enough land zoned residential to double the town size, yet there is a limited supply of vacant sites and our residential land prices are some of the highest in New Zealand.
- Not all are born equal, and not all will ever have the financial capacity to own expensive property in desirable locations. We can't all afford to own a holiday house in an expensive exclusive area. Natural forces of economics prevail. The Policy fails to recognise these differences and desires, and appears to be attempting to make land in all locations affordable to all.
- The policy will take important local decisions away from local councils. It will force councils to make planning decisions to fit central government criteria when these decisions they should be the locals residents. People who know and care for the area should have a greater influence than central government. History is full of poor decisions forced on people by remote leaders.

## **To Summarise:**

The policy is arrogantly flawed and out of touch with the factors influencing price, supply, and the core issues and values of the Queenstown Lakes District.

Central Government policy should not blanket impose planning and growth philosophy over local authorities.

Central Government Policy should not be promoting further rampant growth in locations such as **Queenstown and Wanaka** where most growth is driven by discretionary acquisition. Queenstown Lakes District should be excluded from this Policy statement.

Central Government Policy should be paving the way for greater environmental protection and eventually growth control in the Queenstown Lakes District. Such planning restrictions has been implemented in Boulder Colorado, and is now being planned for the greater Noosa area.