

Legislative Statement for the Severe Weather Emergency Legislation Bill

The Severe Weather Emergency Legislation Bill (the Bill) is an omnibus Bill introduced under Standing Order 267(1)(a). That Standing Order provides that an omnibus Bill to amend more than one Act may be introduced if the amendments deal with an interrelated topic that can be regarded as implementing a single broad policy.

The Bill enables the next phase of emergency response and recovery in the main areas affected by the recent severe weather events.

The amendments are needed to assist recovery and improve resilience for the areas affected by severe weather events, and their councils and communities. It also enables all councils to take immediate action to improve resilience to future weather events with respect to enabling remote attendance at meetings, facilitating planning and decision-making and allowing for concurrent declarations of states of emergency and transition periods.

Specifically, amendments will: ensure emergency powers are available when needed and can be exercised efficiently, including by allowing local authorities an alternative way of providing notice of entry for emergency response activities; modify statutory timeframes that are not practical for businesses or individuals to meet; for a limited time deem certain emergency response activities carried out by rural landowners and occupiers as permitted activities, and facilitate planning and decision-making by all local authorities.

The Bill modifies:

- the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 (CDEM Act) to address issues relating to concurrent declarations of states of emergency and notices of transition periods under the CDEM Act to ensure emergency powers are available when needed. . At select committee the repeal date for these provisions was amended to 1 October 2024; and
- aspects of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) for a limited time to deem certain emergency preventive or remedial actions carried out by owners or occupiers of rural land as permitted activities, while also ensuring environmental safeguards and other checks and balances are retained; extend timeframes for advising local authorities and applying for retrospective consents for emergency work and including processes to notify iwi and hapū of activities which may impact on culturally significant sites; and modify the notice requirements for councils exercising rights of entry for emergency work. These amendments recognise that it may not be possible for those dealing with the impacts of the weather events to comply with all RMA planning and regulatory requirements; and
- the Local Government Act 2002 (the LGA) to enable all local authorities and Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups to meet by audio or visual link and for the members to be counted as present; and to enable all local authorities to amend their current long-term plans in relation to water infrastructure and services to take action to respond to damage caused by the recent severe weather events and improve the resilience to future weather events; and
- Registration and verification requirements in the Food Act 2014 and the Food Regulations 2015, to allow an extended period for food business to renew its registration and to continue operating during the time a registration may have expired. It also exempts food businesses from undertaking any required verification for an extended period. This recognises that it may not be possible for affected communities to undertake their

regulatory requirements for food businesses and allows them to remain open, particularly for isolated communities.