

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Better Regional Boundaries Bill

Member's Bill

Explanatory note

General policy statement

Regional New Zealand is currently served by a confusing web of overlapping, but differing, boundaries for different government departments or agencies.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that, within a reasonable time-frame of 5 years, each government entity aligns boundaries and aligns them with local authority boundaries. This is designed to create clarity and consistency for every Kiwi. It is further hoped that this will drive regional approaches, with shared hubs in small towns where departments work together at a single point of access to serve our communities.

The five year time-frame is to avoid a rush of bureaucracy and to give government departments and agencies time to align their approaches with policy intent of this bill.

Clause by clause analysis

Clause 1 is the Title clause.

Clause 2 provides for the Bill to come into force 6 months after Royal assent.

Part 1

Preliminary provisions

Clause 3 sets out the purpose of the Bill.

Clause 4 is the interpretation clause, which defines terms used in the Bill.

Clause 5 defines what an administrative area is for the purposes of the Bill.

Clause 6 and the *Schedule* provide for transitional matters.

Clause 7 provides that this Bill will bind the Crown.

Part 2

Requirements for determining administrative areas

Clause 8 requires relevant agencies to align the administrative areas that they operate with other relevant agencies and local authority areas, to the greatest extent possible.

Clause 9 provides for the Public Service Commissioner to issue guidance to relevant agencies on how to comply with the Bill.

Clause 10 provides reporting requirements for the Public Service Commissioner and the Minister on compliance with the Bill.

Clause 11 states that the Bill does not create legally enforceable rights or obligations.

Tim Costley

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The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:

1 Title

This Act is the Better Regional Boundaries Act **2025**.

2 Commencement

This Act comes into force 6 months after Royal assent.

Part 1

Preliminary provisions

3 Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to improve the effectiveness of public service agencies and Crown agents, and to improve the accessibility of certain public services, by requiring that administrative areas used by these agencies are consistent, to the greatest extent possible, both with each other and with local government areas.

4 Interpretation

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

Commissioner means the Public Service Commissioner appointed under section 42 of the Public Service Act 2020

Crown agent means a statutory entity named in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Crown Entities Act 2004

local authority has the meaning given in section 5(1) of the Local Government Act 2002

local authority area,—

(a) in respect of a territorial authority, means the district of that territorial authority:

(b) in respect of a regional council, means the region of that regional council

public service agency means any of the agencies listed in section 10(a) of the Public Service Act 2020

relevant agency means a Crown agent or a public service agency.

5 Meaning of administrative area

In this Act, an **administrative area** is a geographic region that is designated or defined by a relevant agency (whether by operational practice or other means, but not including legislation) for 1 or more of the following purposes:

(a) administration and governance:

(b) to facilitate the provision of public services:

(c) to organise and manage resources.

6 Transitional, savings, and related provisions

The transitional, savings, and related provisions (if any) set out in **Schedule 1** have effect according to their terms.

7 Act binds the Crown

This Act binds the Crown.

Part 2**Requirements for determining administrative areas****8 Relevant agencies to use same administrative areas**

- (1) A relevant agency that divides New Zealand into administrative areas for the purpose of carrying out its functions or duties, or delivering services, must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, the administrative areas it uses are consistent with—
 - (a) the administrative areas used by other relevant agencies; and
 - (b) local authority areas.
- (2) A relevant agency, for the purpose of meeting its obligation under **subsection (1)**, must consult, co-operate with, and co-ordinate activities with all other relevant agencies.

9 Commissioner to issue guidance on selection of administrative areas

- (1) The Commissioner must issue guidance on how relevant agencies comply with this Act.
- (2) Before issuing the guidance, the Commissioner must—
 - (a) consult—
 - (i) Local Government New Zealand; and
 - (ii) other persons or organisations that the Commissioner thinks appropriate; and
 - (b) have regard to any comments received.
- (3) The Commissioner must, as soon as practicable after issuing the guidance, ensure that a copy of the guidance is available free of charge on an Internet site maintained by or on behalf of the Commissioner.

10 Commissioner must report to Minister

- (1) The Commissioner must report annually to the Minister on how relevant agencies have been complying with this Act.
- (2) The Minister must present a copy of the report to the House of Representatives within 20 working days after receiving it.

11 Act does not confer or impose legal rights or obligations

This Act does not confer a legal right or impose a legal obligation on any person that is enforceable in a court of law.

Schedule 1
Transitional, savings, and related provisions

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Part 1
Provisions relating to this Act as enacted

1 Interpretation

In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires,—

commencement date means the date on which this Act comes into force

existing administrative area means an administrative area established and in operation immediately prior to the commencement date

transition period means the period beginning on the commencement date and ending 5 years later.

2 Compliance with Act during transition period

- (1) A relevant agency can continue to operate an existing administrative area during the transition period despite that existing administrative area not complying with the requirements of this Act.
- (2) However, a relevant agency that relies on **subclause (1)** must take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is able to comply with the requirements of this Act, as soon as is reasonably practicable and no later than the expiry of the transition period.