



26 August 2024

Andy Foster
Chair
Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee
ti@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Chair,

Building (Earthquake-prone Building Deadlines and Other Matters) Amendment Bill

LGNZ thanks the Transport and Infrastructure Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Building (Earthquake-prone Building Deadlines and Other Matters) Amendment Bill (the Bill). LGNZ supports this legislation.

The current seismic strengthening regime is of significant concern for local government. Councils have key statutory responsibilities for managing earthquake-prone buildings, including the identification and classification of potentially earthquake-prone buildings. They also have an interest in ensuring that in meeting these responsibilities they do not adversely affect local economies, reduce housing availability, or cause loss of buildings that have significant heritage value or are otherwise significant to the area.

Councils have expressed concern that the system imposes unreasonable deadlines on some councils and building owners, which in turn makes investing in strengthening uneconomic, which has negative social and economic impacts on communities. Some areas, particularly those with low commercial rents and property values and with high numbers of historic buildings, were struggling to afford to meet their requirements under the legislation.

These issues were particularly acute in smaller towns, which have a relatively lower risk to life in the event of an earthquake and yet are treated the same as more populated areas under the current legislation.

With this in mind, LGNZ's members passed a remit at the 2023 AGM that was put forward by Manawātū District Council:

“That LGNZ investigate and report to members on ways to help councils and communities that are struggling with the timeframes in the Earthquake Prone Building (EPB) sections of the Building Act and council policies pertaining to Priority Thoroughfares.

LGNZ is therefore strongly supportive of the Government's moves through this legislation to extend remediation deadlines and provide the option to further extend them by two years if required. We also support the improvements to the building warrant of fitness scheme, and the minor technical changes included in the Bill.



While this legislation has a relatively narrow focus, it goes hand in hand with the Government's wider work programme around seismic strengthening. The comprehensive review the Government announced earlier this year was welcomed by councils, who have a number of interests in the review, including:

- Ensuring the obligations on councils and building owners are proportionate and tailored to risk levels, taking particular note of the difference between rural/provincial areas and larger cities and the appropriateness of identified priority thoroughfares
- Ensuring councils and building owners can afford to meet the obligations placed on them
- Ensuring timeframes for meeting obligations are reasonable
- Looking at staging work by prioritising highest risk tasks first i.e. strengthening facades that could fall and injure people below, and/or exploring alternative means to mitigate risk not currently allowed for by legislation

LGNZ looks forward to inputting constructively as this legislation and the wider review move forward. We thank the Committee again for the opportunity to submit, and for any further information please contact William Blackler, Senior Policy Advisor, at William.blackler@lgnz.co.nz.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SB', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sam Broughton
President
Local Government New Zealand