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Generation Zero

Generation Zero's Submission on:

Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region 2022

Introduction

Generation Zero is a youth-led climate action organisation. We mobilise New Zealanders to engage with decision-making and campaign for intergenerational climate justice. Generation Zero generally supports the proposed changes to Objectives CC.1 - CC.13 in the Greater Wellington Regional Council Policy Statement for the Wellington Region and we are excited to see the inclusion and greater focus around issues of climate justice.

Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most important and pervasive issues of our time, there are few areas of our lives that climate change will not affect, and we are only just now beginning to see the effects. This is why we are in support of the insertion of Chapter 3.1A: Climate Change. Climate Change is a lens that needs to be applied to all decisions by regional and local governments; how will this change positively or negatively impact our climate impact, how will this allow communities to adapt to the realities of a changing climate.

Specifically we support the focus on creating an equitable transition which acknowledges the fact that the adverse effects of climate change will not be borne equally amongst the different communities that live in the Wellington region.

We would also like to call out the goal of achieving a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. We are greatly encouraged by the Regional Councils desire to go beyond the bare minimum requirements and we fully support the creation of this ambitious yet achievable target. Wellington is well placed to be a real leader in this area and can hopefully inspire other regions to take similar steps towards a low-carbon future.

Overall, we feel like the focus on climate change and equitable transitions is a step in the right direction and we support the proposed changes to the Regional Policy Statement (RPS).

Urban Development

Housing is another topic which touches on almost every area of our lives and we are currently facing a crisis in; we support the increased focus on density outlined in the changes to the RPS. Density is a critical tool from both a climate perspective and an equity perspective

Denser cities allow people to get anywhere they need without the requirement of owning a car and can help the creation of better public transport routes that serve a greater number of people, further decreasing peoples reliance on cars. Similarly, greater density can be used to create a greater supply of houses to ease the pressure on a housing market that is growing more and more inaccessible and thus gives more people the opportunity to live in a home that is stable, warm and affordable.

This is just the surface level of the benefits that greater density can bring but it is a tool that has power to reshape the communities that we are living in and address some of the most pressing concerns, it's also a tool that has been severely under-utilised in recent years. We would like to see further focus brought to this critical issue and support the alignment with the National Policy Statement around urban development.

We also recognise that greater density is not a silver bullet, and employing greater density doesn't preclude the creation of new greenfield developments. With this, we support the introduction of the requirement for these developments to present a Travel Demand Management (TDM) plan and believe this is a good and crucial step to ensuring that any of these new developments are founded around principles of sustainable mobility. These plans will help to ensure that future generations are not locked into the car-centric design philosophies that are currently commonplace.

Generation Zero supports the vision for a future with neighbourhoods with fewer emissions, more affordable housing and more connected communities.

Freshwater Provisions

Generation Zero supports the freshwater provisions in the proposed changes to the RPS. We believe that freshwater should first and foremost be considered by the value that it gives to the

community and this should be placed before any value to be gained through any extractive processes.

We support the strong stance provided by the environmental bottom lines in relation to freshwater pollution and all the provisions related to Te Mana o Te Wai. We also believe that Te Tiriti should play an important role in the construction of any freshwater policy and the relationship between Māori and these bodies of water should be reflected in the delivery of those policies.

Accessibility

One key area that we think there could be a significant improvement is the accessibility around this consultation process. Generation Zero is a strong believer that allowing for genuine and accessible participation is critical to creating a healthy democracy. Simply allowing submissions and providing the policy documents is simply not enough - an overview of the changes made (in plain and easy to understand English) is critical to allowing people to understand these changes and the implications they may have on their lives.

Generation also strongly believes in targeted engagement and consultation to ensure those most impacted by a policy are heard in its development. Targeted engagement and consultation also allows GWRC to reach those communities which normal consultation processes can be inaccessible to. We strongly encourage GWRC to develop a targeted engagement and consultation process (if there is not one already) to ensure they are engaging with tangata whenua, Pacific communities, youth, refugee and disabled communities, and other communities often excluded from decision making processes.

Without this, the submissions are skewed to groups that have the time, expertise and resources to understand these types of policy documents. This means that the views that help to shape the future of the Wellington region only represent a small subset of the population and are therefore unlikely to be able to accurately represent the views of the community at large.

Conclusion

In general, Generation Zero supports the direction and vision that is enabled through these changes to the Regional Policy Statement, we see the need for this tool as a way to point the Wellington region along a path that supports greater climate, housing and environmental justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on these proposed changes.

Nga mihi nui,

Generation Zero Wellington

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