



Submission on Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region

Kia ora koutou,

VicLabour thanks the Greater Wellington Regional Council for the ability to submit on the Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region. Overall, VicLabour is supportive of the recommendations – particularly around climate, urban development, and freshwater.

Climate

VicLabour is primarily supportive of the recommendation to insert Chapter 3.1A to set a regional direction on adapting to climate change. As a branch of young people, we are immensely aware of the problems that climate change will cause for our generation. From extreme weather events to food and energy insecurity and more, we believe that it is critical GWRC plays its part in creating a climate-positive and environmentally friendly region.

We are particularly supportive of the objectives outlined in Table 1A. These are measurable and realistic goals that we believe the Wellington region can work towards and will help to secure our future in the face of a warming climate. We want to particularly note that objectives CC.1(b) and CC.1(c) are incredibly important for our young people – we need to have suitable infrastructure that is going to stand the test of time, alongside well-functioning urban areas. People need to be able to live their lives in the way they want. Every infrastructure decision we make must be future focussed. Without that, we will continue to see decline. Objective CC.1(c) will help protect that longevity. It's also critical that we provide reason for people to see our city centres as good places to live, and well-functioning urban environments will do exactly that.

We are also supportive of objective CC.2 which pushes Wellington towards being a low-emission city. It's incredibly important that, as part of this, we ensure public transport and green travel is held as a priority for GWRC. Although this submission process does not tackle that, we want to remind the GWRC of the importance of having accessible, cheap, and efficient alternatives to driving.

Urban Development & Transport

We are supportive of the inclusion of urban development within the "climate" sections (particularly chapter 3.1A). This reflects an important reality: denser housing and better urban development ultimately means lower emissions and a greener economy. We are particularly supportive of the need for appropriate urban expansion and building up rather than out. Implementation of the District Plan is incredibly important.

It is good to see that there is a recognition of the lack of housing Wellington has in the modifications to Chapter 3.9, particularly regarding the lack of variety of housing (i.e.: papakāinga). We need to ensure that the housing in Wellington is diverse and built denser, otherwise we will never be able to sustain being the "green" region we desire to be. This does not just apply to Wellington City, but it applies everywhere across the region.



We are also supportive in particular of Policy 31, mentioning the enabling of a range of building heights and density, but we urge GWRC to be careful and consider whether this language or structure in the policy will suffice in creating a good enough “dense housing” mandate. We do note that policy 31(c) may cover this.

Freshwater

We are also supportive of the modifications being made relating to freshwater, particularly in the role that is being proposed for tangata whenua and the need to look after our wai. We believe that the structure of the three priorities in Objective 12 (Table 4) is well set up, especially considering that the health and well-being of water bodies and freshwater ecosystems should always be our first priority. Without healthy waterways, we do not have healthy water, and therefore we do not have healthy people.

We believe the mention on page 48 of the document of “joint decision-making between tangata whenua and GWRC for all decisions about our waterbodies” is good and necessary to ensure GWRC respects and obliges by its Te Tiriti obligations. We also believe that engaging with tangata whenua at the decision-making table, and them being able to make the decisions alongside GWRC, will result in better outcomes for our waterways.

We also support the movement of all data regarding the wai to tangata whenua ownership is incredibly important, as it promotes data sovereignty and providing more of a role for tangata whenua to be kaitaki of the waterways within Greater Wellington. Decisions are better informed with data, and it’s important that data is shared and looked after appropriately.

The above changes are representative of a good shift in GWRC policy towards supporting and listening to Māori voices across the board, particularly when it comes to decision-making about the land and the natural resources around us. It is critical that all decisions, no matter how big or small, include tangata whenua right the way through. It is simply not good enough for Māori to only be included at the decision-making table, they need to be considered and included right from the very first iteration of any idea. This is critical to a successful freshwater policy, and more broadly for any policy.

We support the overall proposed Regional Policy Statement changes and believe that GWRC has taken a good step in the space of climate, urban development, and freshwater to ensure that we are heading towards being a climate-friendly and low-emissions city, alongside genuinely abiding by our Te Tiriti obligations.

For any questions regarding our submission, please contact the Chair by emailing viclabour@younglabour.org.nz.

Ngā mihi nui,

VicLabour

