

22 April 2026

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Submitted via: [Policing Amendment Bill - New Zealand Parliament](#)

Dear Members of the Justice Committee,

### **Submission from the Manawatū District Council on the Policing Amendment Bill**

The Manawatū District Council (MDC) thanks the Justice Committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Policing Amendment Bill (“the Bill”).

MDC supports the intent of the Bill and welcomes the proposed amendments to the Policing Act 2008. Council considers the Bill provides practical benefits by clarifying Police powers following recent legal developments and strengthening the enforcement tools available in public spaces. However, MDC considers it important that the expanded powers are accompanied by clear guidance, appropriate safeguards, and alignment with local government functions to ensure they are applied proportionately and maintain public confidence.

#### **Introduction**

Local authorities frequently encounter challenges in managing behaviour in public spaces, particularly where limited enforcement tools exist or are reliant on Police support. Issues such as non-compliant freedom camping, antisocial behaviour, and misuse of public spaces can be difficult to address effectively without clear and enforceable powers.

Council is often aware of locations where problematic behaviours occur but lacks the enforcement tools to respond effectively, particularly where compliance relies on voluntary behaviour or where there is limited ability to compel individuals to leave an area.

In this context, MDC recognises the importance of ensuring that Police have the necessary legislative authority to support public safety, maintain order, and assist councils in enforcing bylaws where appropriate.

#### **Clarification of Police Powers to Record Images and Sounds**

MDC supports the Bill’s intent to clarify the Police’s authority to record images and sounds in public places and in private places where they are lawfully present.

Council recognises that the recent legal uncertainty following the *Tamiefuna* decision has created operational challenges for Police. Clarifying these powers is appropriate, and Council acknowledges that the ability to collect and use information is a critical component of effective policing, including for prevention, investigation, and intelligence purposes.

However, MDC notes that the proposed provisions are broad, particularly in enabling:

- Recording of any image or sound in public places

- Ongoing or continuous recording for lawful purposes

While this may not be the intent of the Bill, the breadth of these provisions creates a risk that recording powers could be applied inconsistently or more widely than anticipated in practice.

Given the scope of these powers, MDC considers it important that clear operational guidance, appropriate safeguards, and strong oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure these powers are applied proportionately and with due regard to privacy. The breadth of the proposed provisions has the potential to impact public perceptions of privacy if not carefully managed in practice. Maintaining public trust and confidence will be critical to the effective use of these powers.

#### *Decisions Sought*

1. That the Committee recommends that clear guidance and safeguards be developed to support the consistent and proportionate use of recording powers.
2. That the Committee recommends that:
  - Operational guidance on the use of recording powers is publicly available.
  - The application of continuous recording powers is clearly limited to appropriate circumstances.
  - Oversight and accountability mechanisms are clearly articulated.

#### **Expanded Temporary Closure Powers**

MDC strongly supports the expansion of temporary closure powers to include a broader range of accessible areas, including parks, reserves, and other public spaces accessible by vehicle.

From a local government perspective, these changes are particularly beneficial. Councils often face practical limitations in managing high-risk or non-compliant behaviour in public spaces, particularly in areas where reliance is placed on voluntary compliance or where there is limited ability to intervene directly. The ability for Police to close areas where there is disorder, danger, or anticipated offending, to direct individuals and vehicles to leave those areas, and to enforce those directions will significantly strengthen the overall effectiveness of managing such situations.

These powers are likely to be particularly useful in locations such as:

- Freedom camping spots
- Areas experiencing antisocial behaviour
- Places where public safety risks arise quickly and require immediate response

#### **Enforcement and Compliance**

MDC supports the introduction of new enforcement mechanisms, including:

- The power to stop vehicles and direct occupants to leave closed areas.
- Infringement offences for failing to comply with directions.
- Powers to obtain biographical details for enforcement purposes.

These provisions address a key gap in current enforcement frameworks, where non-compliance is difficult to manage in practice. The ability for Police to take direct enforcement action will improve both compliance and deterrence.

The introduction of infringement offences is a proportionate response that enables enforcement without unnecessarily burdening the courts, while still providing a meaningful deterrent.

From a practical perspective, MDC notes that the effectiveness of these powers will depend on Police resourcing and operational prioritisation. In many cases, the ability to respond in a timely manner will determine whether these powers can be meaningfully applied. Ensuring that Police are adequately resourced, particularly in rural areas and outside standard operating hours, will be important to achieving the intended outcomes of the Bill.

### **Interface with Local Government Functions**

MDC considers that, in practice, the effectiveness of these powers will depend on how they interface with local authority bylaws and enforcement activity.

Councils often rely on Police support to assist with enforcement in public places. Without clear alignment, there is a risk that expectations of enforcement may not be consistently met, and that responsibilities between Police and councils remain unclear in practice.

#### *Decisions Sought*

1. That the Committee recommends that guidance be developed that clarifies how Police powers under the Bill will operate alongside local authority bylaws
2. That clear expectations are established regarding when and how Police will support council-led enforcement activities.

Improved alignment will help ensure that the benefits of the Bill are realised in practice and that responsibilities between agencies are clearly understood.

### **Safeguards and Proportionality**

While MDC supports the Bill, we also wish to emphasise the importance of ensuring that the expanded powers are exercised proportionately and appropriately in practice.

Specifically, we consider that:

- The use of recording powers should be proportionate and necessary.
- The use of force and detention powers in closed areas should be carefully managed.
- Clear accountability mechanisms should be maintained.

Appropriate safeguards will be essential to maintaining public confidence and ensuring that the powers are used consistently and fairly.

### **Conclusion**

The Manawatū District Council supports the Policing Amendment Bill in principle.

The Bill provides important clarification of Police powers and introduces practical tools that will strengthen the ability to manage public safety issues in a range of settings. In particular, the expanded temporary closure and enforcement powers will provide meaningful benefits for councils and communities.

MDC considers the Bill would benefit from:

- Clear operational guidance and safeguards relating to recording powers.
- Greater clarity on how Police powers will interface with local government bylaws and enforcement activities.

MDC also notes that the practical effectiveness of the proposed powers will depend on proportional application, clear operational guidance, and sufficient Police resourcing.

With these considerations addressed, MDC considers the Bill will make a positive contribution to public safety and community wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ford, JP'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Michael Ford, JP  
**Mayor**