



24/06/2026

Committee Secretariat
Governance and Administration Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Submission from the Manawatū District Council on Better Regional Boundaries Bill

Dear Members of the Committee

Manawatū District Council (MDC) thanks the Governance and Administration Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Better Regional Boundaries Bill.

MDC supports the intent of the Better Regional Boundaries Bill and recognises the benefits that greater alignment of administrative boundaries across government agencies could provide. A more consistent approach to regional boundaries would improve clarity for residents, businesses, and community organisations when engaging with government services. It would reduce confusion created by differing administrative boundaries and support more effective coordination between central and local government agencies.

MDC supports the Bill's objective of creating clearer responsibilities, improved coordination, and more effective service delivery where these changes benefit communities. The Council acknowledges that the current arrangement of differing administrative boundaries across government agencies can create confusion for residents and make it more difficult to understand responsibilities, access services, and engage with public agencies. Greater alignment has the potential to improve accountability, support regional planning, and strengthen collaboration between agencies operating within the same communities.

However, MDC considers that boundary alignment should not be viewed as an end in itself. Simply changing administrative boundaries will not automatically result in lower costs, greater efficiency, improved service delivery, stronger accountability, or better-informed decision-making. Any future boundary changes should be assessed against the extent to which they deliver tangible benefits for communities and improve the accessibility and effectiveness of government services.

MDC also considers it important that administrative boundaries reflect communities of interest and existing social, economic, and service connections. Boundary changes

should not be driven solely by operational efficiencies, population size, or the centralisation of services and decision-making. Government policy and resource allocation should continue to support all communities equitably, regardless of whether they are rural, provincial, or metropolitan. Any implementation of the Bill should ensure that regional communities continue to have an appropriate voice in decision-making and equitable access to government services.

While MDC supports the overall objectives of the Bill, the Council is concerned about the proposed timing for implementation. The local government sector is currently facing a period of significant review and potential reform, with discussions underway regarding future local government structures, functions, funding arrangements, and boundary configurations. There is a possibility that territorial authority and regional boundaries may change within the next several years. Requiring government agencies to align their administrative areas with existing local authority boundaries before these matters are resolved could create unnecessary duplication of effort, additional implementation costs, and administrative disruption if boundaries subsequently change.

Accordingly, MDC recommends that the Government carefully consider both the implementation timeframe and the principles that should guide any boundary realignment. In particular, the Council suggests that the five-year transition period for compliance should not begin until there is greater certainty regarding any future local government boundary changes. Deferring the commencement of the transition period until after 2028 would help ensure that agencies are aligning with a more stable local government framework, reducing the risk of repeated boundary realignments and enabling the intended benefits of the legislation to be achieved more efficiently and effectively.

MDC also recommends that any future boundary changes demonstrably improve outcomes for communities, reflect communities of interest, and maintain equitable access to government services and resources across rural, provincial, and metropolitan New Zealand. Boundary alignment should support stronger community outcomes and improved service delivery, rather than being pursued as an objective in itself.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Ford

Mayor