
Natural and Built Environment Bill Reform Series: Release of Select Committee Reports and next steps

Next steps in the Natural and Built Environment Reform

The Government is continuing to progress its resource management system reforms following the introduction of the Natural and Built Environment Bill (NBE Bill) and the Spatial Planning Bill (SP Bill) to Parliament in last year.

In the lead up to the release of the Environment Committee's report we published a series of articles on the Bills' key features and concerns raised in the Submissions, you can read these articles [here](#).

The Environment Committee has reported back to Parliament as of the 27 June 2023, the Report contains a reprint of the bill with recommended amendments and a commentary where the Committee explains the recommended changes and the issues it has considered. You can read the report [here](#) for the NBE Bill and [here](#) for the SP Bill.

Second reading:

- The next stage in the process is for the Bills to be read a second time, this must happen after no sooner than the third sitting day after the Committee reports back to the House, being Tuesday 18 July 2023.
- Members of Parliament debate the main principles of the Bills and any of the changes recommended in the Committee report.
- Changes that are not supported by every member of the Environment Committee require a vote by the House at the end of the second reading debate.
- Changes that are unanimously agreed to by Committee Members are automatically included in the Bill if the second reading is agreed by the House. If, however, there is no agreement as to the second reading of the Bills, the Bills do not proceed.
- During this time between the second and third reading Members of Parliament can be lobbied to accept or reject the Bill, or to include specific changes.

Committee of the whole House:

- If the Bills are agreed by a Party vote to proceed they enter the Committee of the whole House. Any member of the House can participate when a committee of the whole House debates the Bill.
- The Committee of the whole debate is less formal than the First, Second and Third readings with the Speaker of the House not present. During this time Members make short speeches and debate in-depth the provisions of the Bills. This is where the details of both Bills will be examined.
- Ministers and Members may suggest changes, these changes may be published prior to the debate, these are known as supplementary order papers of SOPs.
- There is no time limit on the Committee of the whole House debate. Large or controversial Bills may be before the Committee of the whole house for several days, opposition parties often use this time strategically to delay the reading of other Bills on the Order Paper for that sitting block.

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(Continued)

- Once the final form of the Bills is agreed by Party vote they will be reprinted to show the changes made. The Bills then progress to the third reading

Third reading:

- Usually this is a summing up of the changes.
- The vote is at the end of this stage. The Bills will become law after the Royal Assent. Bills are rarely rejected at this point.

Royal Assent:

- The Bills will then be signed by the Governor-General and given Royal Assent - the Bills become law.

Urgency:

- A Minister may move a motion of urgency without advance notice, the Minister when moving such a motion must explain to the House why the Government wishes to take urgency.
- What are the effects of urgency?
 - The House may proceed with business until it is completed, for example if urgency is introduced after the Environment Committee report is presented to the House the three sitting day wait period between the presentation and second reading is bypassed and can occur on the same day. The Bills can also pass through multiple stages, such as the Second reading, Committee of the whole and Third reading in a couple of days. In contrast when the House is not in urgency the Bills can not pass through more than one stage a day.
 - The House extends its sitting hours from 14:00 – 22:00 Tuesday and Wednesday and 14:00-17:00 on a Thursday to the second sitting day resuming at 09:00 until 00:00. This continues until urgency is concluded.
- Bills passed under urgency can progress through more than one stage in a sitting day and expediate the Bills to Royal Assent and law.

Please contact a member of our [Environments, Planning and Natural Resources Team](#) if you would like to know more.