

PARISH SUBMISSION TO THE FINANCE AND EXPENDITURE COMMITTEE ON THE REGULATORY STANDARDS BILL

We, the Parish Council of the Christchurch Central Methodist Parish oppose the Regulatory Standards Bill. We call upon Members of Parliament of all parties who believe in a fair and just, democratic society to reject the bill.

WHO ARE WE?

Christchurch Central Methodist Parish (more commonly known as Durham Street Methodist Church) is a parish of te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa the Methodist Church of New Zealand. As a faith community, we affirm the sacred value of every person and of the environment we live in. Interactions between people cannot be reduced to a mere set of financial transactions. A fair and just society cannot be built on laws which look only at a narrow economic cost/benefit analysis and ignore less-tangible objectives which respect both people and the planet.

We stand especially for those who have been hurt, put down or excluded from society. We stand in solidarity with those who care for the earth, those who believe in social justice, those who believe a better world is possible and aren't afraid of being part of making that happen.

For these reasons we object to the so-called "principles of responsible regulation" defined in the bill as a one-sided and entirely inadequate basis for law-making, which will favour the rich at the expense of the poor and favour selfish business practices at the expense of sustainable development.

We also affirm our unwavering commitment to honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi, which is embedded in our Parish Strategic Directions 2023-2027 and in the national te Hāhi Weteriana/Methodist Church's mission statement and is regarded as a sacred covenant and founding document of this country.

WHAT ARE OUR OBJECTIONS TO THE BILL?

Implications of the Bill for Democratic Processes and Accountability.

The bill will diminish the role of Parliament and act as a restraint on its power to enact law by placing an unelected Regulatory Standards Board as arbiter of appropriate legislation. The bill seeks, without consensus, and indeed in the face of significant opposition, to establish constitution-like powers of influence over almost all future legislative programmes. This is a danger to the democratic process. The powers of redress for individuals and property owners which are defined in the bill will result in excessive power being wielded by those wealthy enough to take Government to court (or to threaten to do so) and so will dampen democratic accountability. The losers under the bill's proposals are employees, the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised, who

lack the financial resources to appeal legislative changes – exactly the people any civilised society should be protecting.

Implications of the Bill for Minorities and Social Equity.

As a central city church, Durham Street has committed to offering hospitality to and working with others supporting those on the margins – offering chaplaincy to the city. This includes speaking out against unjust legislative proposals which are likely to have a negative impact on these communities.

The principles outlined in Section 8 of the bill, particularly 8b-8f, prioritise individual property rights over collective social responsibilities and will disproportionately benefit wealthy individuals and corporations at the expense of ordinary people. The principles are actually political viewpoints, not the balanced set of values which should be considered when legislation is being drawn up and enacted. The effect of applying such a limited set of principles will be to exacerbate social disparities and have a negative effect on society.

Implications of the Bill for the Environment.

The Durham Street Methodist Church, and Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa uphold the sacredness of all of God's creation, which can be understood as seeing intrinsic value in and caring for all the natural world around us.

There is not a single mention of the environment or environmental protection in the bill. The bill would encourage development of legislation which benefits only businesses and individuals without reference to environmental sustainability. When environmental benefits are not weighed in the balance, legislation will have long term impacts on our ecosystems, our climate and our health.

Implications of the Bill for The Treaty, te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The bill limits its scope of influence over Treaty issues only in respect of "Treaty settlement Bills" (Section 10f), defined as those which provide redress for Treaty claims (Section 5). This limitation of scope fundamentally breaches the principles of te Tiriti, the Treaty of Waitangi, as it fails to consult in any meaningful way with Māori. The bill also fails to recognise any efforts to make redress for historic injustices against Māori through non-Treaty-settlement approaches, such as support for te reo Māori or involvement of Māori in governance structures.

As the early Wesleyan missionaries were compelled to speak up to protect Māori rights and interests in regard to land and other taonga, so we have the same duty today as inheritors of their legacy. We stood in solidarity with those who opposed the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill and we stand in solidarity with them again to call upon Parliament to reject the Regulatory Standards Bill and protect the integrity of te Tiriti o Waitangi as a cornerstone of our national identity.