

**Spatial Planning (SP) Bill
Environment Select Committee**

The Salvation Army Submission – 05 February 2023

Summary:

1. Generally, The Salvation Army is supportive of this Bill and the ongoing efforts to reform the resource management law in our country. Our submission to the Natural and Built Environment (NBE) Bill contains our main submissions to the government's efforts to reform the Resource Management Act (RMA) and so we refer the Environment Select Committee to our arguments and concerns set out in that submission also. This submission to the SP Bill will highlight a few key points in relation this Bill and the overall narrative of the NBE Bill.

Background of The Salvation Army:

2. The mission of The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora is to care for people, transform lives, and reform society by God's power. The Salvation Army is a Christian church and social services organisation that has worked in New Zealand for over one hundred and forty years. It provides a wide range of practical social, community, and faith-based services, particularly for those facing various forms of hardship and vulnerability.
1. The Salvation Army employs almost 2,000 people in New Zealand, and the combined services support around 150,000 people annually. In the year to June 2022, these services included providing around 83,000 food parcels to families and individuals, providing some 2,300 people with short-or long-term housing, over 4,000 families and individuals supported with social work or counselling, around 6,600 people supported to deal with alcohol, drug or gambling addictions , around 3,500 families and individuals helped with budgeting, court and prison chaplains helped 3,300 people.
3. This submission has been prepared by the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU) of The Salvation Army. The SPPU works towards the eradication of poverty by advocating for policies and practices that strengthen the social framework of New Zealand. This submission has been approved by Commissioner Mark Campbell, Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army's Aotearoa New Zealand Fiji Tonga, and Samoa Territory.

Responses to the SP Bill:

4. This Bill makes 3 general proposals in its claims to work in tandem with the NBE Bill to form a single, integrated system. We will make specific responses to these proposals.
 - a. **Proposal 1 - Regional spatial strategies (RSS) will identify big issues and opportunities facing regions and develop strategies and implementation plans to respond to them**
 - i. In theory, this is a worthy goal for the RSS. The reduction in overall spatial plans has well been documented in these reforms. But there is no guarantee

that purely reducing the number of plans will enhance and improve the cost-effectiveness, speed and effectiveness of this adjusted planning process.

- ii. Additionally, we re-affirm our concern (also detailed in our NBE submission) that this proposed approach is more top-down rather than bottom up. Ongoing drive from this government to centralise so many functions is somewhat concerning for us. The centralisation of so much power and influence on RPCs and other bodies that are unelected raises concerns for us around public accountability and effective measurement and monitoring of impact, results and success. Furthermore, the centralisation of ultimate decision making to the Minister and their ministry raises more questions for us about local voices versus top-down decision-making. How will the proposed RSS be developed in conjunction with local councils? How will this new structure ensure that smaller local council areas are not excluded or missed by the new RPC bodies when 30-year planning strategies are developed? Again, how we ensure that the new RPCs have the best, most capable people working there? How are they putting forward key community needs and not just any vested interests? The Salvation Army has always advocated for local communities and for their unique voices and realities to be shared at local and central government policy levels.

b. Regional planning committees will devise their own engagement process for developing regional spatial strategies

- i. We submit that any consultation by RPCs must be as extensive as possible. We are aware of communities who are not always able to participate in these kinds of processes, including the elderly, those with limited or no access to digital devices, English as a second language people and so on. Extensive consultation is crucial.
- ii. We also submit that engaging with key social services is vital in the development of RSS. For example, The Salvation Army is not directly involved in the planning processes. Yet, we develop our own social housing with our partners, we provide transitional housing, we have buildings (churches, community ministry centres and family stores) situated around the nation. Therefore, understanding both current situations and future possible trends is vital to this RSS planning.

c. Central government will provide clarity to regional spatial strategies and participate in their development

- i. As stated in paragraph 5(a)(ii) above, we are somewhat concerned about this relentless push for centralisation of power and decision-making. Government policy should enable good RSS, allow for valuable infrastructure and facilitate and support both private and public property rights. Taking more power away from local communities in this planning space might have some advantages around speed, less red tape and so on. But ideas and theories need to be tested in practice and these new functions in the SP and NBE Bills need strong scrutiny given their reach into the lives of all New Zealanders.