



Tēnā koe

17 April 2023

Pānui – National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity

Over the last several years, we have heard from Te Tai Tokerau about the whakapapa connections between tangata whenua and the taiao and how those connections inform not only the identity of iwi, hapū and whānau, but that the Mauri of the whenua lies at the heart of everything you do, which no council or RMA process could or should replace.

We also heard concerns of hapū and whānau to continue to be able to exercise your right to rangatiratanga over your whenua, taonga and resources. This concern included a risk that whenua Māori owners could not utilise their whenua according to tikanga and potentially impact future use.

For the last thirty years, local councils have been required under the Resource Management Act to identify and protect important remaining sites of indigenous biodiversity (known as Significant Natural Areas).

But for all that time, there have been no standards or rules for how to go about doing that. That has led to highly variable approaches around the motu. In places it has been executed poorly, leading to understandable concern and resistance, and in some places litigation.

In the Far North, a previous council started to implement Significant Natural Areas in a way that caused extensive anxiety and resistance. They paused their processes in recognition of that anxiety. I supported their decision to pause while the Government developed methods that councils would have to abide by.

These methods come in the form of a National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB), which the Government has been developing since 2016. Over that time, there have been two exposure drafts that have been widely consulted on – and there have been concerns raised.

On the back of your concerns, the NPSIB has been carefully reconsidered and some significant changes proposed. We have made changes to balance the need for the maintenance and protection of indigenous biodiversity on whenua Māori, with the development of that land.

This recognises the historic limitations to development, as well as the prevalence of existing indigenous biodiversity on whenua Māori. Tangata whenua should be part of the decision-making process for indigenous biodiversity, and taonga species.

We also need to make sure that Significant Natural Areas are an economic benefit, rather than a liability. I am currently exploring the development of a system of biodiversity credits to support the protection of indigenous biodiversity across Aotearoa.

I will be visiting Te Tai Tokerau from 26 - 27 April. I would welcome and appreciate a korero on indigenous biodiversity, the proposed National Policy Statement, and the economic development opportunity that biodiversity credits represent.

Link to the latest resources: [NPSIB Exposure Draft 2022](#), [NPSIB Summary for iwi/Māori](#).

Ngā mihi nui,

Hon James Shaw

Associate Minister for the Environment