

17 November 2025

Committee Secretariat  
Environment Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington  
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## Retail NZ submission: Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill

1. Retail NZ is a membership organisation that represents the views and interests of New Zealand's retail sector. We are the peak body representing retailers across Aotearoa, with our membership accounting for nearly 70% of all domestic retail turnover. New Zealand's retail sector comprises approximately 30,000 businesses and employs around 227,000 Kiwis.
2. Retail NZ welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Fast Track Approvals Amendment Bill. We strongly support the Bill's intent to improve competition in the grocery sector and streamline consenting processes. However, we believe the Bill should be amended to ensure that all supermarket development applications, whether from new entrants or existing supermarket operators, can easily access the fast-track regime for developments that deliver consumer benefits. Competition and consumer benefit should be the test – not ownership status.
3. Retail NZ considers that the timeframe for submissions on this Bill is inadequate and does not allow submitters adequate time to canvass members' views thoroughly. There is a risk of inferior outcomes with such hasty legislative changes, in comparison with a process which allows time for full consideration of the issues and input across a range of interested parties.

### Our Position

4. Supermarket development consenting is currently too slow and complex. Existing supermarket operators face significant delays and costs under the Resource Management Act and local planning rules. These barriers hinder investment in new stores, upgrades and innovative formats that could improve consumer choice and affordability.
5. Many communities lack adequate supermarket access, leading to higher prices and limited choice. Allowing both new and existing operators to fast-track developments in these areas will address this gap.
6. Faster consenting for supermarket projects will help accelerate investment that can ease cost-of-living pressures, particularly in underserved communities.
7. The Bill currently signals a narrow focus on new entrants. While the Government has promoted the Bill as creating an 'express lane' for new supermarkets, the text of the Bill mentions the grocery industry only once across 59 substantive clauses.
8. The Bill aims to reduce timeframes and costs for consenting. Extending this benefit to all qualifying supermarket projects will maximise its impact and create operational efficiencies.
9. Competition and consumer benefit should be the test – not ownership status. The 3 November statement on the Bill from Ministers Hon. Nicola Willis, Hon. Chris Bishop and Hon. Shane Jones makes clear that projects improving grocery competition should qualify

for fast-track referral<sup>1</sup>. Retail NZ agrees. However, competition can be enhanced not only by new entrants but also by existing chains expanding into underserved regions, introducing new store formats, or upgrading infrastructure to improve efficiency and reduce costs. The Ministers' statement notes that the dominant incumbent grocery players would only be considered for fast-track referral in very limited circumstances where they can demonstrate a specific project would not reinforce their existing market dominance but would, for example, bring consumer choice to an underserved region. Retail NZ's view is that all supermarket developments should be considered on their merits, not their ownership status.

## Recommendations

10. Retail NZ recommends:
  - a. Explicitly include existing supermarket operators in eligibility criteria where their projects demonstrably improve competition, consumer choice or regional access.
  - b. Clarify in the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition that expansions by incumbents into underserved areas, or projects introducing new formats (e.g., discount stores, supercentres), qualify for fast-track referral.
  - c. Ensure consistency in interpretation by expert panels so that decisions are based on competition outcomes rather than assumptions about market dominance.

## Conclusion

11. Retail NZ supports the Bill's objectives but urges the Committee to ensure that fast-track provisions apply to both new entrants and existing supermarket operators where projects improve competition and consumer outcomes. This approach will deliver the greatest benefit to Kiwi shoppers and help address cost-of-living challenges.
12. No part of this submission should be withheld under the OIA.

Sincerely,



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/express-lane-new-supermarkets-underway>