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Committee Secretariat
Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington
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Retail NZ submission: Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill

Overview

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 consulted our membership in the preparation of this submission.
3. Retail NZ is generally supportive of the goals and suspected outcomes of the Bill, in moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more proportionate, risk-based regime, and the certainty it gives to building owners and leaseholders.
4. We recognise the importance of reducing the risk to life posed by buildings vulnerable to seismic events. However, effective earthquake-risk regulation must strike a balance between public safety and economic sustainability, and include considered timeframes for compliance. This Bill largely strikes that balance.
5. Retail NZ supports the Bill's move to concentrate mandatory requirements on specified classes of buildings located in medium and high seismic risk areas, rather than the current national approach which does not take into account regional earthquake risk. The new approach provides clarity and certainty as to what buildings can be captured by these rules and where.
6. Retail NZ would like to understand whether the Government has consulted with the insurance industry as to what ramifications - both positive and negative - these changes might have for building owners and leaseholders? i.e. is there is lower risk to these buildings from an insurance perspective?
7. We support the introduction of a range of mitigation options, including targeted strengthening and façade securing, as alternatives to full structural retrofit where building integrity is not compromised, as it offers some building owners a more cost-effective yet meaningful solution, and may reduce instances of unnecessary full building demolition, which currently is sometimes the more affordable option.

8. Retail NZ also supports allowing territorial authorities appropriate discretion to consider local conditions within the national framework, such as variations in seismicity, building stock, economic conditions, and community priorities, as long as that is balanced alongside the risk to public safety. The ability to allow reasonable extensions for the completion of remedial work is also important here, especially in those areas, like parts of Otago, which have recently had their quake risk upgraded.

Conclusion

9. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. Retail NZ considers the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill an improvement on the existing regime, that better aligns regulatory intervention with actual risk, reduces unnecessary compliance costs, and provides greater certainty for building owners and leaseholders while maintaining a clear focus on public safety.
10. Retail NZ is happy to discuss any aspect of this submission further.
11. No part of this submission should be withheld under the OIA.

Sincerely,



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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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