

Taupō District Council
Private Bag 2005
Taupō 3352
New Zealand

9 August 2023

Attention: Commissioners

Dear Commissioners

Fire and Emergency New Zealand letter to be tabled (Hearing for Plan Change 42 – General Rural and Rural Lifestyle Environments) – Taupō District Council

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) made a submission on Plan Change 42 (PC42) to the Taupō District Plan (submitter 105) which sought amendments to the proposed General Rural and Rural Lifestyle Environment chapters within the Taupō District Plan (TDP).

The Officer's report for the PC42 hearing has been received and it is noted that 30 submission points by Fire and Emergency have been addressed. Fire and Emergency has opted not to attend the hearing for PC42 – General Rural and Rural Lifestyle Environments scheduled to commence Monday 21 August 2023 and requests that, in lieu of attendance, this letter be tabled for the Hearing Commissioners' consideration.

The Reporting Officer has recommended the rejection of Fire and Emergency's submissions to include rules / standards within the rural environment chapters requiring land use activities to be provided with a firefighting water supply, and access to that supply, in accordance with the New Zealand Fire Service Firefighting Water Supplies Code of Practice SNZ PAS 4509:2008. The Reporting Officer explains that they do not consider it appropriate to include these matters within the rural environment chapter, as they are managed in the district-wide chapter. Furthermore, they consider that the Building Act 2004 and Code of Practice for Development of Land 2009 currently address matters such as fire-fighting water supplies.

Fire and Emergency considers that the existing standards of the TDP are not adequate to ensure that land use activities in the rural environment are provided with a sufficient firefighting water supply. As outlined in Fire and Emergency's submission, the provision for adequate water supply, especially in rural and isolated areas, is critical. In the rural environment, there are generally no reticulated supplies available. In these instances, the design / size of subdivisions and developments must be capable of containing an onsite firefighting water supply, and providing fire appliances access to the site and that water supply. Fire and Emergency has noticed an increasing frequency of instances where land uses in unreticulated areas are not provided with an alternative firefighting water supply or it is not of a size / design appropriate to serve the development. This is demonstrated by developments such as the hydrogen plant on Forest Road, Mokai. The hydrogen plant is located within the rural environment, however there are no water supplies available for firefighting purposes.

Furthermore, Fire and Emergency encounter scenarios where there is inadequate access provided to reach the water supply source. The Reporting Officer has recommended rejection of Fire and Emergency's submission points seeking the introduction of a new standard for firefighting access, which would ensure that vehicular roading and access width, surface and gradients would provide for the operational requirements of Fire and Emergency.

Regarding the Building Act requirements for building access for firefighting purposes, the Building Act relates to fire emergencies only but does not address the broad other services Fire and Emergency provides such as emergency response for medical emergencies or during natural hazard events.

The Building Act is focussed on the building itself and components required to make the building structurally sound and safe for those who use it (section 3). This includes ensuring people can escape a building on fire.

Part C of the Building Code deals with protection from fire. The focus of that document is on the 'design and construction' of the building - i.e., built features that address fire safety issues. Of particular note, Clauses 5.3-5.8 require the structural features that allow fire service vehicles to deploy near the building that give firefighters the ability to safely get to the fire and back out of the building, and that ensure clear information about the fire safety systems in the building and any hazardous substances present. There is also a requirement that there is the means for getting firefighting water around (i.e. within) a building. These requirements do not apply to all developments, as specified in Part C5.

In terms of access, Clause C5 is potentially the most relevant part of the Building Code. However, while clause C5 outlines the access requirements for buildings it does not cover provision of, and access to the building or the site more generally.

It is for this reason Fire and Emergency seeks provisions relating to access under the RMA. The provisions proposed relate to controlling an effect on the building, its occupants and other nearby buildings (and their occupants), in this case the effects of fire, rather than the direct performance of the building and this is an acceptable provision to include to address a very clear, potentially significant, effect under the RMA.

Fire and Emergency recognise that the Reporting Officer has suggested these matters can be address during the comprehensive district plan review in 2024. However, Fire and Emergency is concerned that developments will be consented in the interim that are not provided with a sufficient firefighting water supply, and/or access to that supply. It is further noted that policy exists in PC42 that addresses transport (i.e. Policy 3b.2.11, Rule 4b.4.1 Vehicle movements, Rule 4b.4.11 Parking Loading and Access) and on-site servicing (Policy 3b.3.11) which would indicate that in the interim, the subdivision and General Rural chapter would be a suitable location for the new performance standards sought within Fire and Emergency's submission.

As such, Fire and Emergency considers the existing TDP standards present a risk to life and property and therefore request that the relief sought in Fire and Emergency's submission relating to firefighting water supply and access be considered further by the Commissioners.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Cradock
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Bay of Plenty