



Social Housing Reform (Transaction Mandate) Bill

**Submission to the Social Services
Select Committee**

September 2015



For a better working life

New Zealand Public Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

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PSA submission to Social Services Select Committee

Introduction

Who we are

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 62,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities), state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

The PSA has been advocating for strong, innovative and effective public and community services since our establishment in 1913. People join the PSA to negotiate their terms of employment collectively, to have a voice within their workplace and to have an independent public voice on the quality of public and community services and how they're delivered.

With members working both in Housing New Zealand Corporation and contracted community providers the PSA is well placed to comment on this bill.

PSA submission

This submission focuses on the provisions of the Bill that relate to the creation of the unprecedented "transaction mandate".

The purpose of this bill appears to be to enable ministers of Housing to side-step statutory and other constitutional arrangements in order to sell assets belonging to Housing New Zealand Corporation, which is a legal entity in its own right.

Most New Zealanders would not agree that the Government should be able to legislate to avoid constitutional checks and balances and in particular the rule of law.

In the PSA's view this bill is unnecessary. The sole driver for this bill appears to be haste. Government already has the means to set policy that HCNZ as a crown agent must give effect to.

We understand that the status of Housing New Zealand Corporation is under review. If the government wishes to have a greater degree of hands-on control over the assets of Housing New Zealand Corporation then the more transparent

and democratic course would be to change the legal status of the Corporation. Ministers exercise influence through their shareholding in State Owned Enterprises and have a much larger degree of control over public service departments.

To continue with the Bill as it stands risks giving New Zealanders the impression that the government believes it must only comply with statutory and constitutional arrangements when it suits it to do so.

The ring fencing of the transaction mandate to sale of assets and contracting of transition services for social housing has the unfortunate effect of reinforcing this impression of expedience and perhaps arrogance.

The PSA submits that the committee should recommend withdrawal of the Bill as its policy objectives can be met through existing statutory arrangements.

For further information about this submission contact:

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