

Sir,

We reply to your letter of 31/01/2024, addressed “Tena koe”.

In particular, we address the process of your letter, which appears to us to lack good faith. It appears to betray the intentions expressed in what you write.

Your process amounts as much to an assault on our democracy, that your Government claims in its coalition agreements to uphold, as the content of your letter amounts to an assault on our environment, to which, as Minister Responsible for RMA Reform you are responsible.

Using a Māori form of address is odd for a Minister in a Government whose policy is to use English as its primary form of communication. The use of this form in your letter thus suggests cultural misappropriation, disrespect and a colonialist attitude.

“Tena koe” does not specify who you are addressing except as being an individual. If you were addressing ‘Dear Voter’, as would be appropriate in a democracy like ours, that would be fine and good. However, the form of address you use invalidates any response by a collective, such as ourselves, who would be addressed as ‘tēnā koutou’.

You have not given notice of this letter in any truly public way; you have required feedback within a tight fortnight; and you have released the letter over a period of public distraction with Waitangi Day. With such limitations on participation, it is very hard to know how to make any contribution; hard to know in what way and to what extent any contribution will be “valued”.

With some difficulty, I sought your letter online and initially found not the letter itself but an apparently frank summation of its intent by Anderson Lloyd, environmental

consultants, who suggest that the letter is addressed to “stakeholders”. In a general sense of course, everyone in New Zealand’s democracy is a stakeholder in “New Zealand’s prosperity”, to quote your letter. In contrast, the content of your letter clearly indicates that your concern for our prosperity is in a business sense, prioritising “locally, regionally and nationally significant infrastructure and development projects”. The stakeholders in this context would be well defined as anyone with a ‘legitimate interest’ in the business at hand, i.e. with a primarily pecuniary interest recognised at law. As you say, this will be a “one-stop shop process”; a process by which vested interests principally will prosper.

The whole process of your letter indicates that your own interest in writing, rather than hoping for “our valuable contribution to policy development”, is to seek our endorsement of the fully-formed intentions that you openly express in the letter. You reveal little of how those intentions will affect either the voting public or the “environment” that supplies those resources which you intend to manage. This is a continuance of the kind of ‘trust-us-we-know-best’ process that has led many Māori people to distrust the intentions of successive colonialist governments, that have failed to live up to their promises.

We, Climate Karanga Marlborough, consider that what you, in your letter, say you are planning will constitute an assault on our natural world; that is, the environment which you mistakenly consider as an ongoing provider of resources with which business can continue to progress as usual. The fast-track regime, of which you do not specify particulars, will be under a standalone Act, by which ministers will be able pre-emptively to determine project referrals, priorities and decision-making. This is day-to-day

rule by dictate not by any form of participatory or contributory democracy. There are no apparent 'checks and balances' to fast-track authority other than an "Expert Panel" with limited powers and of uncertain make-up. If made up of political appointees, it will provide little to no check on the consenting power you propose, potentially leading to litigation and even a slowing of the consenting process.

You do not specify what you mean by the "adverse effects" of a project.

The adverse effects with which we are concerned are the effects of industrial activity on the natural environment: pollution, climate warming, ocean heating and acidification, biodiversity loss and a neglect of caring for Papatūānuku and the wellbeing of all her children. - There is not even a mention of concern for the natural environment in your letter. - These all constitute an assault on our environment, which the content of your letter continues to promote.

Yours, Climate Karanga Marlborough.