New Zealand
Legislation
Reports

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Parliamentary Legislation Report

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Report Overview

Written by Cole Isles, the Parliamentary Legislation Report keeps you up to date on the latest and upcoming laws in the New Zealand Parliament. Designed to make legal changes clear and accessible, the report highlights legislation that could impact businesses, government operations, property owners, workers, and consumers. Whether you're navigating new regulations or simply staying informed, this report provides the insights you need to understand how legal reforms may affect you.

Legislative Developments

Employment Relations Amendment Act

Proposed by: Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety Brooke Van Velden

This bill introduces changes to employment classifications and personal grievance procedures. Key points include:

- Clarifying the definition of employees and introducing the "specified contractor" category.
- Requiring written agreements to define worker relationships.
- Adjusting personal grievance rules, including wage thresholds for unjustified dismissal claims and removing the "30-day rule" for Collective Employment Agreement terms.

The bill aims to provide greater clarity and certainty for both employers and workers, which may reduce disputes and administrative challenges. The act came into force on February 21, 2026.

Retail Payment System (Ban on Merchant Surcharges) Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister for Commerce and Consumer Affairs Scott Simpson

This bill aims to reduce consumer costs by banning surcharges on in-store EFTPOS, Visa, and Mastercard payments. Key points include:

- Estimated $150 million is paid annually by consumers in payment surcharges, with $45–65 million exceeding merchant costs.
- The legislation paves the way for future bans on online payment surcharges.

The bill may reduce costs for consumers, while merchants may need to absorb these costs or adjust pricing to offset losses. The bill is expected to come into force by May 1st, 2026.

Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety Brooke Van Velden

This bill aims to reduce compliance costs and clarify obligations for organisations. Key points include:

- Redefining "critical risk" to focus on hazards likely to result in death, serious injury, illness, or notifiable incidents.
- Allowing organisations to focus on significant health and safety issues rather than minor matters.

The bill may streamline compliance and day-to-day operations while maintaining protections for workers. The bill is expected to come into force by September 24th, 2026.

Public Works Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister for Building and Construction Chris Penk

This bill proposes amendments to the Public Works Act 1981 to improve efficiency in land acquisition for public works projects. Key points include:

- Early signing bonuses for landowners, ranging from $5,000 to $100,000 (approximately 10% of sale value).
- Increased overall compensation for landowners.
- Requirement for consent from the relevant Māori portfolio Minister before issuing a notice of intention to take protected Māori land.

The bill may improve compensation for property owners while introducing additional steps for acquiring certain lands, which could affect the timing of public works projects. The bill is expected to be enacted in mid-to-late 2026.

Commerce (Promoting Competition and Other Matters) Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister for Commerce and Consumer Affairs Scott Simpson

This bill proposes reforms aimed at strengthening competition in New Zealand business markets. Key changes include:

- Businesses would no longer need prior authorization from the Commerce Commission for certain actions, such as changes in conduct or collective bargaining agreements. Businesses would notify the Commission and proceed unless objections are raised.

The change may improve operational efficiency, increase competition, and potentially affect costs for consumers and businesses. This bill is expected to be enacted in mid-2026.

Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister of Education Erica Stanford

This bill reforms the Education and Training Act 2020. Key points include:

- Attendance exemptions must follow regulations set by the Secretary of Education, rather than being decided individually by school principals.

The bill standardizes attendance policies across schools, which may have indirect effects on families and communities. The bill is expected to be enacted in mid-2026, specifically around July 2026.

Building and Construction Sector (Strengthening Occupational Licensing Regimes) Amendment Bill

Proposed by: Minister for Building and Construction Chris Penk

This bill aims to improve regulatory oversight of building and construction professionals. Key points include:

- Clarifying and expanding the powers of regulatory bodies.
- Enabling codes of ethics for licensed tradespeople and enforcement against unethical or negligent behaviour.
- Allowing the Building Practitioners Board to enforce training orders and coordinate disciplinary actions.

The bill may improve construction quality for consumers but could increase regulatory requirements for building and construction professionals. The government's goal is to enact this bill by April 2026.

Did You Know?

In 2025, the New Zealand Parliament passed a total of 89 bills. How many of these were you aware of, and were you aware of the effects these bills could have on your work, business, or daily life?

This report is designed to provide awareness of legislation that may impact various aspects of life in New Zealand.

NZ Economic Outlook - 2026

- GDP Growth: The economy is expected to expand by 2.5% to 3.4%. Despite this growth, per-capita GDP will remain relatively weak due to low productivity.
- Inflation: Inflation is projected to return to the Reserve Bank's 1–3% target range by mid-2026, remaining close to the 2% midpoint, although risks to this outlook persist due to the ongoing US–Iran conflict.
- Mortgage Rates: Borrowers are seeing relief as more mortgages roll onto lower rates, easing household repayment pressures.
- Unemployment: The unemployment rate is expected to peak around 5.3%–5.5% early in the year before gradually declining as employment picks up.
- House Prices: House prices are projected to rise modestly by 2%–4%, supported by a high supply of homes that keeps the market relatively balanced.
- Key Risks: Global trade tensions, ongoing instability from the US–Iran conflict, tighter government finances, and cautious consumer spending remain significant headwinds to the economy.