



SocialLink – Tūhono Pāpori<sup>1</sup> is the umbrella peak body for the social and community sector and represents over 1500 organisations and individuals working in the Western Bay of Plenty

SocialLink walks alongside social service providers, community and Māori organisations to strengthen their capability as they deliver services to their communities, as well as advocates for the sectors interests, social justice and equity of opportunity for all people living in the WBOP.

[www.sociallink.org.nz](http://www.sociallink.org.nz)

## **Submission on the Public Works Amendment Bill**

### **Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee**

**January 2026**

***“He ture tika, he whenua mau, he oranga mō ngā uri.”***

***When the law is just, the land remains, and future generations flourish.***

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Public Works Amendment Bill. SocialLink is committed to mana ōrite partnership and honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi and as such this submission focuses on the Bill’s impact on Māori, specifically whenua Māori.

#### **Why SocialLink is making a submission on this bill**

Our work includes supporting communities to have access to and agency over the determinants of their social, health and financial wellbeing. Land or whenua is central to Te Ao Māori. It is a taonga imbued with exercising values of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga.<sup>2</sup> Much of what was Māori land was confiscated by the Crown or lost through discriminatory legislation and action, despite Te Tiriti o Waitangi agreements on kawanatanga (governance), tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) oritetanga (equity) signed between hapū, iwi and the Crown. Of what is

---

<sup>1</sup> Legal name is Social Sector Innovation Western Bay of Plenty Charitable Trust: Charities registration number CC50192.

<sup>2</sup> Te Puna Kokiri Ko Nga Tumanako o Nga Tangata Whai Whenua Māori. Owner Aspirations Regarding the Utilisation of Māori Land, 2011.

remaining, up to a third is landlocked with no physical access unless consent from neighbouring owners is given.<sup>3</sup>

Determinants of wellbeing include access to land and the ability to develop it if wished, for homes/kainga, business, horticulture or other purposes. Other determinants include decent incomes, food, education, safe housing, flourishing cultural and spiritual practices, a healthy natural environment. There is considerable evidence about the negative socio-economic and health consequences for people with poor access to these essential elements and the disproportionate impact on Māori.<sup>4</sup>

We are therefore submitting on this Bill because we are worried there are proposed clauses which may affect the ability of Māori to retain their whenua.

### **Specific proposals in the Bill**

While some provisions offer improvements for Māori landowners, as outlined below, the devastating historical grievances of past land confiscations (raupatu) and ongoing alienation of Māori land creates significant concern that the Bill does not sufficiently protect whenua Māori land rights or uphold Māori rangatiratanga and the intergenerational responsibilities attached to it.

**Socialink opposes any aspects of the Bill that fail to uphold Māori rangatiratanga, Māori land rights, and equity of access.** This includes provisions that reduce transparency or accessibility, such as limiting notices of proposed land acquisition to online-only formats.

Socialink **urges stronger safeguards** where local authorities seek to compulsorily acquire Māori land, aligned with Crown processes that require joint ministerial decision-making, but at an equivalent territorial authority level, reflecting Te Tiriti partnership and active protection obligations.

The following provisions of the Bill **are supported** as they move the legislation closer to equity, transparency, and recognition of Māori land rights, though they do not go far enough to fully meet Te Tiriti obligations:

- **Equitable Valuation:** valuing Māori freehold land as if it were general land for compensation (Section 62(4)), supporting fairness and reducing historic inequities in land valuation.
- **Extended Negotiation Period:** extending the minimum negotiation period from three months to six months for Māori freehold land with more than four beneficial owners (Section 18(4)(b)), enabling more meaningful consultation and collective decision-making.
- **Compulsory Acquisition Safeguards:** requiring joint ministerial decision-making for compulsory acquisition of protected Māori land (Section 23B(a)(b)), strengthening
- Crown accountability and reflecting Te Tiriti partnership.

---

<sup>3</sup> Radio New Zealand. 'How do the people break through?' – third of Māori land considered landlocked. Reporter Pokere Paewai, 12 January 2026. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihī/583823/how-do-the-people-break-through-third-of-māori-land-considered-landlocked>

<sup>4</sup> Public Health Advisory Committee. Determining our Future - Social, Cultural, Economic and Commercial Determinants of Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: Actions to improve our health and wellbeing. Wellington: Ministry of Health

**Liz Davies**

Chief Executive