

Making it easier to build granny flats

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Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



This fact sheet is a summary of the Making it easier to build granny flats discussion document. This resource is to support people and organisations who want to make a submission.

The proposals in this consultation intend to achieve the Government's commitment to make it easier to build small, self-contained and detached houses, commonly known as 'granny flats' on property with an existing home on it.

Background

Some small buildings are already exempt from building and resource consents. The proposals in this consultation intend to enable 'granny flats' up to 60 square metres in size to be built without the need for a building or resource consent, so long as they meet certain criteria. Granny flats aren't just for older people or retirees – they can provide an affordable housing choice for many New Zealanders. There is increased demand for smaller homes, in part due to Aotearoa/New Zealand's ageing population, and the growth in numbers of smaller families.

The proposed criteria granny flats must meet to be exempt from a building or resource consent will form the checks and balances required to ensure granny flats meet building performance and quality, and appropriately manage environmental effects. We want these to be safe, healthy and durable homes.

Following this consultation, feedback will be carefully assessed and used to inform advice to the Government on ways to amend the Building Act 2004 (Building Act) and resource management system. Changes are intended to be in place by mid-2025.

What we are proposing

To make it easier to build granny flats and increase the supply of affordable homes for all New Zealanders. This consultation looks at two key pieces of legislation that set out the rules for residential building, the Building Act and the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).

Building Act

The Building Act sets out the rules for the construction, alteration and demolition of buildings. Regardless of whether building work is exempt from a building consent or not, all building work must comply with the New Zealand Building Code.

The building system proposals in this consultation include:

- establishing a new schedule in the Building Act providing a building consent exemption for simple standalone houses up to 60 square metres in size
- the conditions and criteria for these homes to be exempt from a building consent
- assessment of the associated short and long-term benefits, costs and risks
- sufficiency of occupational licensing requirements to ensure all building work will meet the Building Code
- potential barriers to the uptake of the proposed exemption
- time and money savings compared to the status quo
- additional or alternative ideas to the proposed options.

Initially, it was suggested that an engineer's report may be required for granny flats built without needing to undergo the building consent process. However, this could introduce new engineering services and additional costs. Instead, we are proposing that all work is conducted or supervised by competent professionals under current occupational licensing requirements to ensure all building work will meet the Building Code.

Resource Management Act

Many district plans already allow granny flats without resource consent, but there's a lack of consistency and different standards across the country.

A national environmental standard (NES) would need to be created to permit a granny flat on sites in rural and residential zones without resource consent. An NES means changes can come into force quickly.

The NES would apply in rural and residential zones where it is anticipated most granny flats will be built. We want to know whether people think the NES should apply to other areas too, such as mixed-use zones where there's a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial buildings.

While the proposed changes would make it easier to build granny flats, changes must be balanced against existing issues, including managing flood risks. Certain district plan rules will still need to apply.

A set of permitted activity standards are proposed to cover aspects such as the size, how much of a property can be covered by buildings and how close a granny flat can be to a neighbouring property boundary.

Timeline



For more information, visit:
mbie.govt.nz/grannyflats