

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Via email: building@mbie.govt.nz

26 November 2024

Re. Consultation on increasing the use of remote inspections in the building consent process

As you may know, Property Council is the leading not-for-profit advocate for New Zealand's most significant industry, property. Property is New Zealand's largest industry with a direct contribution to GDP of \$50.2 billion (15 percent). The property sector shapes New Zealand's social, economic and environmental fabric. Property Council advocates for the creation and retention of a well-designed, functional and sustainable built environment, in order to contribute to the overall prosperity and well-being of New Zealand.

Property Council would like to acknowledge the Government's current focus on improving productivity and efficiency in the building sector, with this consultation aligning new initiatives with broader regulatory changes and ongoing Building Consenting Authority reforms. It is no secret that the current consent system is slow and inefficient, and improvements are necessary. Our members have seen the consenting system delay development, add unnecessary costs and hinder innovation for the sector.

We are writing to you to provide comment on the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment consultation: increasing the use of remote inspections in the building consent system. Property Council is broadly supportive of the proposals and recommends the adoption of **Option 3: requiring building consent authorities to use remote inspections as the default approach for carrying out certain inspections**. Our members understand that not all building work is suitable for remote inspections, however, may be the preference in certain cases.

For example, it is critical that the structural foundation of a building is assessed in person by a building inspector. However, an on-site inspection of wall insulation may not carry the same risk profile and could be assessed via remote inspection. Furthermore, having the option to follow up with an on-site inspection if a building inspector is not satisfied with the remote inspection tools, will maintain confidence and safeguard quality. We note that this approach may need to be implemented gradually, and supported by robust training and education, to ensure the sector is ready for the changes.

Property Council is also supportive of Building Consent Authorities contracting more Accredited Organisations (Building) to undertake inspections, as this creates a wider variety of avenues for the sector to use. We agree that the formatting and content of the inspection reports provided by Accredited Organisations (Building) will likely need to be prescribed to ensure consistency.

Overall, Property Council supports the utilisation of remote inspections, where appropriate, as it will create better efficiencies and increase productivity for the sector. This work, along with the Government's other reform work in the building systems space, will help create an improved system, enabling the development of sustainable and resilient communities which are capable of meeting future needs.

Yours sincerely,



Leonie Freeman
Chief Executive
Property Council New Zealand