



Open Letter to Members of Parliament

12 March 2026

Dear Member of Parliament,

The Independent Research Association of New Zealand (IRANZ), the peak body representing Aotearoa's independent research organisations, is concerned about proposed reforms to the Building Research Levy Act. Although the reforms are designed to strengthen the building sector, IRANZ is concerned they could instead undermine the independent, public-good building science capability established by industry and sustained over almost 60 years, unless explicit protections are included. We are making this letter public given the significance of these reforms to every New Zealander.

The Government's review of the building and construction system is timely and necessary. However, the proposal to repeal the dedicated Building Research Levy and move all building-related research into a fully contestable funding model presents a significant long-term risk to New Zealand's building-science capability. Contestable funding alone cannot sustain the specialist laboratories, long-term research programmes, and expert staff required to underpin safe, resilient, and high-performing buildings. These capabilities take decades to build and can be lost quietly and irreversibly if funding becomes short-cycle and uncertain.

Across the wider research sector, IRANZ members have seen firsthand how fragile specialist capability becomes when long-term public-good science is forced to rely solely on short-cycle contestable funding. The building and construction system is particularly exposed: its regulatory settings, product assurance pathways, and climate-resilience strategies depend on stable, independent scientific evidence. The Building Research Levy has been one of the few mechanisms that reliably maintains this capability, supported by the Building Research Advisory Committee, which plays a critical role in ensuring that industry investment is directed toward research with clear practical application and measurable impact. This committee provides structured sector input, helping to align research priorities with real-world needs and ensuring that levy-funded work delivers tangible benefits across the building system.

Removing the Levy without establishing a protected baseline risks replicating failures seen internationally, where commercial pressures and fragmented funding weakened the integrity



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of testing and standards systems. New Zealand cannot afford similar vulnerabilities in a sector that affects every home, business, and community.

BRANZ's work, such as seismic and fire research, moisture and durability studies, product assurance testing, and digital tools like BRANZ Maps and Artisan, provides essential evidence for standards, consenting, and regulatory decision-making. Much of this research is not commercially viable but is vital to public safety, climate resilience, and the performance of New Zealand's building stock. The Levy has been the mechanism that ensures this work is delivered consistently and independently in the public interest.

IRANZ supports BRANZ's call to modernise the Building Research Levy Act rather than repeal it. If the Government proceeds with structural change, we strongly recommend safeguards including multi-year transitional funding to maintain the long-term research programmes, datasets, and key resources that deliver core public-good research, and permanent ring-fenced baseline funding for critical BRANZ infrastructure that cannot be sustained through contestable grants alone.

Independent research organisations across the country share BRANZ's concern that the unintended consequence of reform could be the erosion of the very scientific capability the system relies on. We urge Parliament to ensure that any changes strengthen - not weaken - the evidence base that keeps New Zealanders safe.

IRANZ stands ready to engage constructively on these matters and to support the development of a research system that is both modern and resilient.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McDermott", is written over a light grey circular stamp.

Dr John McDermott
Chair
Independent Research Association of New Zealand (IRANZ)



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