



## Briefing on the upcoming release of Our Land 2024

Date submitted: 20 March 2024

Tracking number: BRF-4389 / MM2751

Joint agencies: Stats NZ

Security level: In Confidence

MfE priority: Not urgent

### Actions sought from Ministers

Name and position	Action sought	Response by
To Hon Penny SIMMONDS <b>Minister for the Environment</b> Hon Andrew BAYLY <b>Minister of Statistics</b>	Agree to forward Indicate whether you would like to meet	28 March 2024

### Actions for Minister's office staff

Forward this briefing as agreed below

Return the signed briefing to the Ministry for the Environment ([ministerials@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ministerials@mfe.govt.nz))

### Appendices

- Excerpts of the *Environmental Reporting (Topics for Environmental Reports) Regulations 2016*

### Key contacts at Ministry for the Environment

Position	Name	Cell phone	First contact
Principal Author	Benjamin Ogilvie		
Responsible Manager (MfE)	Aaron Napier	027 247 1893	✓
Responsible Manager (Stats NZ)	Stuart Jones	9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager (MfE)	Megan Hurnard	027 235 7158	
General Manager (Stats NZ)	Jason Attewell	9(2)(a)	

### Minister's comments

# Briefing on the upcoming release of Our Land 2024

## Key messages

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1. This briefing informs the Minister for the Environment and Minister of Statistics of the release procedures for the upcoming report *Our Land 2024* (OL24), a report produced independently of Ministers under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015.
2. You will receive an embargoed release package (including the report and communications material) to support you on 9 April 2024, and officials will be available to meet with you to discuss the report contents and communications material.
3. OL24 will be publicly released at 10:45am on 10 April 2024.
4. We will work with your offices to confirm requirements for an in-person briefing for any Ministers who require one.

## Recommendations

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We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** that reports are prepared independently of Ministers under s15 of the Environmental Reporting Act 2015,
- b. **Note** that environmental indicator statistics on Highly erodible land, and Estimated Long-term soil erosion are being updated and will be published by Stats NZ on 27 March 2024.
- c. **Note** Our Land 2024 will be released under embargo on the 9 April 2024 and released to the public on the 10 April 2024.
- d. **Note** on 9 April 2024, you will receive a release package including the full Our Land 2024 report, material to support any necessary media responses, and the media release.
- e. **Note** that we can provide the release package to other relevant Ministers as necessary.
- f. **Note** your role in presenting reports to the House of Representatives.
- g. **Agree** to forward this briefing to:
 

i	Minister for Infrastructure	Yes   No
ii	Minister Responsible for RMA Reform	Yes   No
iii	Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology	Yes   No
iv	Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery	Yes   No
v	Minister for Agriculture	Yes   No
vi	Minister for Hunting and Fishing	Yes   No

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|------|---|----------|
| vii  | Minister of Forestry                    | Yes   No |
| viii | Minister for Conservation               | Yes   No |
| ix   | Minister for Māori Development          | Yes   No |
| x    | Minister of Climate Change              | Yes   No |
| xi   | Minister for Biosecurity                | Yes   No |
| xii  | Minister for Resources                  | Yes   No |
| xiii | Minister for Regional Development       | Yes   No |
| xiv  | Minister for Rural Communities          | Yes   No |
| xv   | Other Ministers you wish to forward to: |          |

h. **Indicate** if you would like a verbal briefing from officials on the report's contents on the 9th of April 2024.

Yes | No

## Signatures

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Megan Hurnard  
General Manager  
**Data, Evidence & Insights**  
**Date: 19/03/2024**



Jason Attewell  
General Manager  
**Economic and Environment Insights**  
**Date: 20/03/2024**

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Hon Penny SIMMONDS  
**Minister for the Environment**  
**Date:**

Hon Andrew BAYLY  
**Minister of Statistics**  
**Date:**

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# Briefing on the upcoming release of Our Land 2024

## Context

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1. Under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 (ERA 2015), the Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ are required to provide independent and regular information on:
  - the state of our environment
  - the pressures that have influenced that state
  - the impact this has on Te Ao Māori, the economy, and the health of New Zealanders.
2. The recent briefing BRF-4126 *Briefing on the Environmental Reporting Programme* (sent to the Minister for the Environment, CC the Minister of Statistics) provides an overview of the ERA 2015 and the production process.

## Report Content

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3. Our Land 2024 will follow the conventional framework for environmental reporting of Pressure, State and Impact as required by the ERA 2015 and associated regulations.
4. Appendix 1 provides a complete list of the topics that environmental reports about land must cover under the *Environmental Reporting (Topics for Environmental Reports) Regulations 2016*.
5. A key theme of Our Land 2024 will be that resilient landscapes and ecosystems form the natural infrastructure that supports our everyday lives. This includes the natural resources that underpin our economy, critical functions that help us manage the effects of environmental challenges, as well as supporting our cultural identity and public health.

### *These topics have relevance to other ministerial portfolios*

6. Several ministerial portfolios have an interest in different dimensions of land and the value it provides. Based on these interests and content of this report, we have provided a list of ministerial portfolios you may wish to forward this briefing to for their information. Officials can liaise with your offices to discuss which Ministers you may wish to forward this briefing to, based on their likely interest in OL24.

## *OL24 reports on 15 environmental indicator statistics*

7. We expect OL24 to reference 15 of the environmental indicator statistics<sup>1</sup> produced by Stats NZ relating to land. At the time of release, four of those indicators will have been updated and published on Stats NZ's website since the last Our Land report in 2021:
  - Wetland area
  - Extinction threat to indigenous species
  - Highly erodible land
  - Estimated long-term soil erosion
8. The indicators on Highly erodible land, and Estimated Long-term soil erosion are being updated currently, and will be published by Stats NZ on 27 March 2024.
9. 11 of those indicators have not been updated since the last Our Land report in 2021:
  - Active sand dune extent
  - Indigenous land cover
  - Land fragmentation
  - Predicted pre-human vegetation
  - Soil quality and land use
  - Urban land cover
  - Exotic land cover
  - Irrigated land
  - Livestock numbers
  - Rare ecosystems
  - Temperature
10. This means the detail of changes over the last three years will be mainly sourced from the body of scientific literature published in recent years.

## *OL24 will include 'outlooks'*

11. This will be the second report to include an assessment of outlooks, which are forward-looking assessments of how the environment may change in future based on current data and trends. We first included outlooks in Our Atmosphere and Climate 2023 and intend to continue including them to make the report a more useful product for decision-makers.

## **Release Process**

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12. Our Land 24 will be published on the Ministry for the Environment website on 10 April 2024 at 10:45am.
13. The day before, at 10:45am on 9 April 2024, you and any Ministers you may wish us to include, will receive a written briefing and an embargoed release package that includes:

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental indicators are high quality official statistics produced by Stats NZ, that conform to the best practice processes and principles for statistics. Wherever possible they are the preferred evidentiary basis for reporting on environmental state and trend.

- The full OL24 report,
  - Model answers to questions we consider the media or public are likely to ask (both of Ministers and of the Ministry),
  - The key messages that officials will be using to communicate the report,
  - The press release the Ministry will be publishing alongside the report,
  - A summary of how we plan to engage with stakeholders (including industry, NGOs, councils) about the report.
14. We follow Stats NZ's procedures for Tier 1 statistic releases for the report, meaning relevant government agencies, select stakeholders, and media will receive an embargo copy of the report at the same time with an accompanying press release.
15. Officials' experience is that reports receive some media attention immediately after release, and stakeholders (particularly in the science community) may issue press releases responding to the report. Typically, because the work is conducted independently of Ministers, media queries can be referred to the Ministry (as the lead producer of the report) or Stats NZ (as the lead on environmental indicator data). For anything you wish to respond to directly, officials will be available for communications support.
16. We will work with your offices to confirm your requirements for an in-person briefing on 9 April 2024 in advance of the public release of the report.

### *Role of the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Statistics*

17. Under s15 of the ERA 2015 Environmental Reporting must be undertaken independently of Ministers of the Crown. This means the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Statistics are not involved in creating content for reports, to ensure the public can have faith in the objectivity of the report.
18. Under the ERA 2015, Ministers' only role is to jointly present the final report to the House of Representatives as soon as is reasonably practicable (s7(2) and s10(2)). In practice, the Minister for the Environment's office tends to handle the logistics of presenting the report via the House Office.
19. We will work with your offices to assist with jointly presenting the report to the House of Representatives.

### *OL24 has been developed with the support of independent subject matter experts*

20. As described in BRF-4126, OL24 is supported by independent experts, based on environmental data that have been quality assured, analysed, and published by Stats NZ as environmental indicators, and makes use of evidence from reputable scientific literature.

## *Our partnership with the Science Learning Hub*

21. We work to make reports and their findings accessible and relevant to the public. Alongside the main report, officials are assisting the Science Learning Hub<sup>2</sup> to develop an educational package for schools based on the report's contents. These packages and online resources are published at the same time as the report.
22. Science Learning Hub materials have substantially increased the reach of past reports. Materials associated with Our Atmosphere and Climate 2020 achieved more than 22,000 New Zealand page views across 21 resources and 23 videos, with more internationally. Materials associated with Our Environment Aotearoa achieved more than 10,000 page views across 11 resources.

## **Other Considerations**

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23. There are no financial, regulatory, or legal implications or issues arising directly from the release of OL24.

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<sup>2</sup> A national project funded by the New Zealand Government to make examples of New Zealand science, technology, and engineering more accessible and visible. Content is developed by teachers, teacher educators and multimedia experts working closely with New Zealand's scientists, technologists and engineers.

## **Appendix 1: Excerpts of the *Environmental Reporting (Topics for Environmental Reports) Regulations 2016***

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### *Land domain*

#### **8 Topics relating to land domain**

In the environmental reports required by sections 7(1) and 10(1)(d) of the Act, the topics relating to the land domain are,—

- (a) in relation to the state of the land domain,—
  - (i) land cover, ecosystems, and habitats; and
  - (ii) land species, taonga species, and genetic diversity; and
  - (iii) land and soil condition; and
- (b) in relation to the pressures causing, or having the potential to cause, changes to the state of the land domain,—
  - (iv) pests, diseases, and exotic species; and
  - (v) resource use and management, and other human activities; and
  - (vi) waste, effluent, and contaminants; and
  - (vii) the physical form of the land environment; and
  - (viii) climate and natural processes.

### *Impact topics applying to all domains*

#### **10 Impact topics for all domains**

The topics relating to the impact that the state of the environment and changes to it may be having on each of the impact categories in relation to each of the domains are as follows:

- (a) biodiversity and ecosystem processes; and
- (b) public health; and
- (c) the economy; and
- (d) mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori, and kaitiakitanga; and
- (e) customary use and mahinga kai; and
- (f) sites of significance, including wāhi taonga and wāhi tapū; and
- (g) culture and recreation.