

# Environment Estimates Hearing

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## 01 Opening remarks

### Introduction

- Obviously, our environment is incredibly important to our economy and the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.
- The economy in New Zealand relies heavily on the natural environment, with our primary industries and tourism sector comprising a significant proportion of our export revenue that sustains our way of life.
- This Government is serious about growing our economy and doing its part to cut red tape make infrastructure and housing quicker, easier, and cheaper to build in New Zealand in parallel with sensible environmental protection.
- For the environment, our focus is on supporting resource management reform, work to reduce waste, better recover and recycle materials, and ensuring good value environmental investments – including through making broader use of the Waste Disposal Levy.

## Key focus areas

- In March, the Minister Responsible for Resource Management Reform, Hon Chris Bishop, announced we will replace the Resource Management Act with new planning legislation that will make it easier to get things done while protecting the environment.
- Cabinet has made in-principle decisions on a range of features for the new resource management system. These include:
  - introducing a Planning Act focused on regulating the use, development, and enjoyment of land;
  - introducing a Natural Environment Act focused on the use, protection, and enhancement of the natural environment; and
  - creating a clearer legislative basis for setting environmental limits.
- Budget 25 has allocated future funding to deliver the first two years of the National Direction programme and the third phase of the Resource Management Act reform.
- Funding will support more resources to accelerate delivery of policy and scientific input, standardised zoning, legislative drafting, upholding Treaty and settlement commitments, legal support, and a programme business case to be developed for the implementation of a modern resource management system.
- This is a key economic initiative for the Government to bolster housing and infrastructure growth.

## Waste Levy / Environmental Investment

- We have made changes to the way we allocate the Waste Disposal Levy to deliver a balanced package of initiatives that supports the waste sector while also pursuing wider environmental aims.
- Recognising the importance of effectively managing waste, a significant portion of Levy funding has been allocated to this purpose, including:
  - \$30 million each year for new initiatives via the Waste Minimisation Fund (in addition to continuing to fund previously approved projects).
  - \$20 million each year for new initiatives via the Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund (in addition to continuing to fund previously approved projects).
  - An additional \$40 million over the Budget period for remediation of contaminated sites where there is Crown liability.
  - Arrangements to support funding of the management of emergency waste (a new broad funding category includes scope to fund such work).
  - Ongoing funding for associated functions of the Ministry for the Environment to manage the Levy and support the waste and hazardous substances work programme.
- The Government continues to focus on environmental investment through allocating funding to other organisations like Kaipara Moana, New Zealand

Landcare Trust, and Toimata Foundation (Enviroschools) to increase environmental benefits or reduce environmental harm.

- Budget 25 has allocated Levy funding to community conservation, predator and erosion control, and greenhouse gas mitigation. The use of the levy has contributed to fiscal savings at the same time as ensuring continuing funding for these important environmental programmes.
- In addition, \$10 million was allocated to the Environmental Protection Authority to upgrade its outdated ecotoxicological risk assessment models.
- Some existing investment activities have also been grouped within a single funding category, the Environmental Investment Fund, as a step towards simplifying and consolidating investments and improving flexibility and coherence.
- The Ministry for the Environment will be working to streamline its investment activity. Some existing investment activities have also been grouped within a single funding category, the Environmental Investment Fund, as a step towards simplifying and consolidating investments and improving flexibility and coherence.
- Work will also be carried out across Government agencies to explore whether environmental investment across agencies can be better consolidated to improve effectiveness.

## Waste Policy / Product Stewardship

- The Government also continues to advance other important work to reduce waste.
- Good progress has been made on product stewardship.
- The country's first regulated product stewardship scheme, Tyrewise, came into full operation in September last year – with more than 3 million tyres collected already.
- Schemes for synthetic refrigerants and agricultural plastics are next in line. Both are well advanced and the priority over the next 12 months is to ensure those schemes will be successfully implemented.
- The Government has recently finished up consultation on changes to the Waste Minimisation Act, including: proposals that would modernise our product stewardship and producer responsibility arrangements, provides a better and more proportionate range of compliance tools, and provide for councils to invest the waste levy in a broader range of environmental outcomes.

## HSNO

- The Government has also prioritised its agricultural and horticultural products review – to ensure better streamlining and more efficient assessment of key farming products, so we can boost productivity and effectiveness whilst still managing the health and environmental risks.

- The review made 16 recommendations. The Government has agreed to all of them. We are now focused on implementation. This will include some changes to the HSNO Act related to assessment processes and timeframes. Investment in updating the EPA's ecotoxicology model and other operational actions will also be important.

## **Closing**

- The Government is taking strong, deliberate action to strike the right balance to enable development while safeguarding our environment.
- We have a programme of work underway that will help us to protect our environment, so it can continue to underpin New Zealand's economic and social wellbeing.

# Schedule of upcoming legislation by Minister portfolio

Note: Timelines may have changed since this was provided to Ministers for the Estimates Hearings, as can be expected with the legislative programme

		2025				2026		
	Work	Apr – Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr – Jun	Jul – Sep	
<b>Bishop</b>	Phase 2 – National Direction			Gazettal 15 Dec				
	Phase 3 – RMA Replacement (Planning Act, Natural Environment Act)	Drafting		Select Committee		1.2.3 Readings		
	Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill intro 30/09							
<b>Simmonds</b>	Environmental Reporting Act Amendments	Drafting	LEG Committee 21/08		Gazettal in Q1 2026			
	Waste Minimisation Act Amendments (including Regulated Product Stewardship framework)				Drafting		Select Committee	Gazettal Oct '26
	HSNO Act – Omnibus Bill (including Agricultural and Horticultural Products Regulatory Review)	PCO Drafting			Select Committee			Gazettal by June '26
	HSNO Policy Priorities and Leg amendments – secondary Legislation		LEG Committee 14 or 21/08					
	International Arrangements (re Rotterdam, Stockholm, Basel Conventions)				Policy options and CAB approval	Engagement		Drafting until December '26
	ERP2 Synthetic Refrigerants Regulated Product Stewardship scheme				Rotterdam: Amending I&E Order		Publish Regulations	
					Drafting Instructions			
<b>Watts</b>								9(2)(f)(iv)
	Climate Change Response (ETS - Forestry Conversions) Amendment Bill		Bill introduced end June			Secondary Leg		
								9(2)(f)(iv)
	ETS Annual Settings					Drafting		
	ETS Annual Regulations Update	Consultation						
								Gazettal by 30 Sep and into force 1 Jan 2026
<b>All</b>	Treaty Principle Provision Review (4 Acts: HSNO, EEZ, Environment, CCRA)		Minister's communicates decisions to MoI by end June					Drafting and introduction this term of government

\*CCRA Amendment (Omnibus) Bill may also include: outsourcing of the Emissions Trading Register, afforestation on crown land, changes to 2050 targets, and removals framework. Not shown: MIE providing input into Regulatory Standards Bill (MFR)

## Key achievements

The Government recently:

- Launched the Government's strategy to reduce waste and improve its management in New Zealand. The strategy sets out the Government's approach to reducing the environmental and economic harm caused by waste.
- Confirmed the waste work programme to help achieve the strategy's goals.
- Commenced two waste related consultations: the first for new waste legislation and the second on proposed regulations to improve the way waste from commonly used farm plastic products is managed. Both consultations closed on 1 June 2025.
- Launched consultation on a large package of proposals for new and amended national direction under the Resource Management Act covering a range of topics including freshwater, infrastructure, renewable energy housing and highly productive land. Consultation runs until 27 July 2025.
- Is progressing substantive policy work to replace the Resource Management Act with two new Acts being a Planning Act and Natural Environment Act. Work on this commenced last year with the establishment of an Expert Advisory Group who delivered a 'Blueprint' report which provides baseline architecture for the new resource management system.
- Has progressed the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Bill which covers a number of system improvements to the Resource Management Act.
- Has commenced or completed remediation of the following sites/landfills through the Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund:

- Peel Forest (\$6m, Timaru District),
- Tāhunanui Back Beach (\$3.4m, Nelson)
- Project Reclaim (\$3m, Waitaki District) have been awarded funding and the remediation is complete.
- Released, in conjunction with Stats NZ, 'Our Environment 2025', the latest three-yearly state of the environment report.
- Delivered regulatory relief through an Order in Council under the Severe Weather legislation to speed up flood protection works in Auckland (in effect end of September 2024).
- Delivered a longer period of regulatory relief for farmers in the Hawke's Bay needing to undertake recovery works on rural properties following Cyclone Gabrielle (in effect end of Sept 2024).
- Started developing legislation to amend the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 to improve the quality of data produced under the Act and to make environmental reporting more efficient and useful.
- Received Cabinet approval for amendments to the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act to better support innovation and economic growth while maintaining robust environmental and human health protections. This work is being done under the Agricultural and Horticultural Products Regulatory Review Omnibus Bill.

## **02 Waste**

### **Launch of revised waste strategy**

- The Government's strategy to reduce waste and improve its management in New Zealand was launched in March 2025.
- The strategy sets out the Government's approach to reducing the environmental and economic harm caused by waste.
- Its goals will be supported by initiatives like new waste legislation, investing the waste disposal levy to have the greatest impact, reducing waste emissions, making sure New Zealand has well-managed resource recovery and disposal facilities, and limiting the environmental harm caused by contaminated sites, including historic contamination.
- The Government's new waste strategy focuses on waste and resource efficiency outcomes, and the tools and methods to achieve them.

## Waste legislative amendments

- Public consultation opened on 22 April 2025 inviting feedback on five proposals:
  - creating a framework for extended producer responsibility, to ensure producers remain accountable for their products even after consumers have used them;
  - changes to how the waste disposal levy is allocated to territorial authorities, and what they can spend the money on;
  - clarifying roles and responsibilities for central government, local government and the waste sector;
  - our air improving tools for compliance, monitoring, and enforcement;
  - enabling efficient and effective measures to control littering and other types of mismanaged waste.
- Consultation closed on 1 June and officials are currently analysing submissions which will inform subsequent policy development. The objective is to introduce new waste legislation before the next general election.

## **Product Stewardship Schemes**

- The Government has made good progress on product stewardship.
- The country's first regulated product stewardship scheme, Tyrewise, came into full operation in September last year, with more than 3 million tyres collected already.
- Schemes for synthetic refrigerants and agricultural plastics are next in line. Both are well advanced and the priority over the next 12 months is to ensure those schemes will be successfully implemented.
- The Government is also currently consulting on legislative changes that will modernise our extended producer responsibility provisions.

## **Tyrewise Product Stewardship Scheme**

- Overall feedback from industry is supportive and the scheme is proving to be highly effective, with around 3 million end-of-life tyres collected and being repurposed for fuel and other products since the scheme became fully operational on 1 September 2024. It is also reducing illegal dumping of tyres, contributing to a cleaner environment.
- Implementation has identified some challenges and unintended consequences, which are being remedied by minor amendments to the relevant regulations.
- These changes will ensure rebates are available for tyres that are subsequently exported, that costs are borne appropriately, and that the administrative burden is minimised as much as possible.
- These changes cannot be applied retrospectively and those who have already paid the fee on exported tyres will not be able to reclaim those costs.

## **Agricultural chemicals and plastics product stewardship**

- Voluntary schemes for these products have been in place for some time and are well supported by the rural sector.
- A mandatory scheme will incorporate the two existing schemes and will make services more easily accessible for farmers, reducing the incidence of on-farm burning and burying.
- Consultation ended on 1 June 2025.

## **Synthetic refrigerants product stewardship**

- Synthetic refrigerant emissions are estimated to make up about 2 percent of New Zealand's annual greenhouse gas emissions.
- A voluntary scheme for the collection and destruction of used synthetic refrigerants has been operating since the early 1990s.
- In November 2024, Cabinet agreed to draft regulations for introducing a mandatory product stewardship scheme for synthetic refrigerants. Further work on the development of this scheme is underway.

## **Plastic Packaging Product Stewardship**

- The packaging sector and brand owners have been working on a scheme design over the last couple of years (the design was led by NX food and grocery council and The Packaging Forum).
- They have now submitted their scheme recommendations report. A full assessment of the report is underway.
- The Ministry is engaged with scheme design group, to understand next steps industry plan to take. These steps may involve further research, forming a Product Stewardship Organisation, and whether applying for accreditation.

## **Lithium-Ion batteries product stewardship**

- Fires associated with the incorrect handling of Lithium-Ion batteries are increasing. These fires pose risks to human health and safety, and critical infrastructure and environmental harm. This is a problem globally, with no consensus on the solution.
- There are proposals for regulated product stewardship schemes that could address part of the problem, but these will not be delivered within a timeframe that recognises the urgency of the issue.
- Industry is calling for support from central government to bring together the relevant organisations with an interest and/or responsibility for mitigating the risks presented by these products. The aim would be to identify an immediate response, recognising that a longer-term approach is also needed.
- The Ministry is working with WasteMINZ (a waste industry association) to support a Battery Sector Review Report, which will provide a full overview of the current state of small batteries in New Zealand. This Report will look at the scale of the problem including risks related to fires, health and safety, and environmental impacts. The Report will include recommendations for next steps for both Government and industry.

## Plastic phase-outs

- In November 2024, Cabinet agreed to remove the 2025 deadline for the planned tranche 3 plastic phase-outs and agreed that officials undertake further policy work to ensure any tranche 3 regulations are supported by industry and workable.
- The 2025 deadline was no longer workable. Stakeholders needed additional time to shift to more sustainable alternatives because:
  - new materials need to be procured from different suppliers,
  - research, product development and trials need to be conducted to test for varying functionalities, notably shelf-life, which is a key concern among stakeholders,
  - manufacturing machinery needs to be modified or custom built to accommodate different materials.
- Tranche 3 intended to capture all remaining PVC and Polystyrene (#3 and #6) food and drink packaging that wasn't already covered in the Tranche 1 and 2 bans. Although the 2025 deadline is not workable across all products, many manufacturers have already moved away from these materials. Remaining applications for tranche 3 include PVC cling film and polystyrene yoghurt pottles.
- PVC cling film is commonly used to wrap food, notably meat, over a rigid plastic tray in supermarkets and butcheries. This is often done with a machine and one of the challenges is getting alternative products to work with existing machinery. Cling film for sale in individual rolls (e.g. Glad Wrap) no longer commonly contains PVC, and there are many alternatives available.
- The Ministry has engaged with stakeholders through March-May to understand their progress towards transitioning to new materials.

- The Ministry is working toward providing advice to the Minister. This will include options for the scope and timing if tranche 3 regulations were to be progressed.

## **Eco Choice Aotearoa**

- Eco Choice administer the environmental label on behalf of the Minister for the Environment.
- As the Minister for the Environment, I have agreed to revisit the contract with Eco Choice which expires in 2026. There is no funding attached to that contract.

## **Plastics Action**

- Government has taken a number of steps to address plastic waste, for instance:
  - Progressed kerbside standardisation to clean up recycling streams
  - Progressing agricultural plastics product stewardship scheme
  - Continue to engage internationally to work towards a Global Plastics treaty.

## **Recycling system**

### **Kerbside standardisation**

- From February 2024, kerbside collections were standardised across New Zealand with all council collections now accepting the same materials.
- This made the system clearer and more consistent across the country, reducing confusion about different things being recyclable, or not, in different areas.

### **Recycling Leadership Forum**

- Standardising kerbside recycling also meant some things, which could not be consistently recycled across the country, are no longer accepted.
- The Recycling Leadership Forum (RLF), established in May 2024, brings together players from across the packaging and recycling value chain to develop solutions for packaging now excluded from kerbside recycling systems.
- The RLF is investigating solutions for a range of materials from aerosols, caps and lids, to secondary materials in fibre packaging (e.g., plastic lined cardboard) and soft plastics. All are complex areas with a history of unresolved issues within New Zealand.
- The RLF has further work to do but will be reporting to government shortly. The Ministry will in turn provide advice to the Minister

### **Container Return Scheme**

- There is a high level of stakeholder interest in this topic.
- This is an opportunity to clarify that changes to the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 are needed to implement an effective Container Return Scheme.
- Further work is on hold until Waste Minimisation Act changes are in place.

## **Rescinded policies**

- **Four policies agreed by the previous Government have been rescinded:**
  - a requirement for all councils to provide food and garden waste collections for urban areas;
  - a requirement for all councils to provide recycling collections for urban areas;
  - a benchmarking performance standard for recycling, food and garden waste collections, including targets; and
  - a requirement for private companies to report on the amount of recycling, food, garden and general waste they collect from households in a district.
- A mandatory approach that imposes an additional cost on councils is not the right approach at this time. There continues to be support for infrastructure through the Waste Minimisation Fund.

## 03 Funding

### Environmental Investment Fund

- The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has underscored the complexity and fragmented nature of the environmental investment landscape, which was expected to spend well over \$1 billion this fiscal year.
- The Government sees significant potential to enhance environmental investment value, aligning with its focus on performance and fiscal discipline.
- The Environmental Investment Fund is a consolidation of some existing funds (excluding the Waste Minimisation Fund) that have been grouped within this category as a step towards simplifying and consolidating the Ministry's investment function and improving the coherence and value of investment.
- The funding of \$97.586 million is specific to the 25/26 financial year, and it includes the Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund, the Freshwater Improvement Fund, the Kaipara Moana Remediation, Environment Training Programmes, Promotion of Sustainable Land Management, and emergency waste funding. Budget allocation to this fund will change over time based on future government priorities and value for money assessments.
- Realising this vision will take time, but through Budget 25 the Ministry for the Environment has made significant progress by consolidating its investment activity into a new Environmental Investment Fund, focusing on high-quality integrated investment management and robust prioritisation to improve environmental outcomes.

- In the coming year, the Ministry for the Environment will also work jointly with other agencies on how a broader investment consolidation could best be pursued to inform Budget 26 decisions.

## **Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund**

- The **Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund** (previously the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund) launched in October 2024, with \$30 million until 2026. The fund supports detailed site investigation, remedial planning, and site remediation. During this time, remediation has started or been completed in the following sites/landfills:
  - Peel Forest (\$6m, Timaru District),
  - Tāhunanui Back Beach (\$3.4m, Nelson), and
  - Project Reclaim (\$3m, Waitaki District) has been awarded funding and the remediation is complete.
- As mentioned above, a mechanism has been developed to provide funding for local authorities to manage emergency waste and to repair or replace waste management and minimisation infrastructure damaged by an emergency.

Criteria for the emergency waste funding has been gazetted and was presented to Parliament as secondary legislation in May 2025.

## Waste Levy Key points

- The Government has continued to incrementally step up the waste levy, and there will be a further increase on 1 July – increasing revenue for investment and supporting incentives for diversion and recycling.
- Total revenue from the levy is projected to be approximately \$256 million in 2025/26, compared with \$35 million in 2020/21.
- The Government also last year through Budget 24 expanded the use of the Government share of the levy to cover a wider range of environmental objectives, and is presently consulting on a similar expansion of the local government share.
- The Government has continued to allocate a significant proportion of funding towards waste outcomes – including through Budget 25:
  - \$30m each year for the Waste Minimisation Fund
  - \$20m each year for Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills
  - an additional \$40 million over the Budget period for remediation of contaminated sites where there is Crown liability, and
  - a commitment to access the waste levy in the event of an emergency such as severe weather or earthquakes.

## Levy Changes (urgent 2024 Budget night amendments)

- Against the background of the broader waste legislative reform work, urgent legislative reform of the waste disposal levy provisions of the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 were undertaken for Budget 2024. This was done with limited timeframes and no engagement and consultation.
- The changes came into effect on 1 July 2024 through the Waste Minimisation (Waste Disposal Levy) Amendment Act 2024. The changes enabled the central government share of the levy (50 percent) to be spent on a wider range of environmental activities including:
  - activities that reduce environmental harm or increase environmental benefits;
  - waste-related emergency spending;
  - the remediation of contaminated sites, including vulnerable landfills; and;
  - funding the Ministry for the Environment to undertake its responsibilities in relation to waste management and minimisation and hazardous substances.
- The amendments:
  - made incremental increases to waste levy rates over three years from July 2025 to July 2027 for class 1-4 landfills.
  - enabled me to approve funding of projects to provide for the remediation of contaminated sites (including site investigations, remediation plans and on-site remediation works).
  - enables the Secretary for the Environment to approve applications for waivers of the levy for contaminated site remediation works, so that the levy does not become a barrier to remediation works.

- provides support to councils when responding to emergency events, enabling the Secretary for the Environment to approve spending levy money on the management of emergency waste and repair or replacement of waste management and minimisation infrastructure.

***Does the proposal to expand the waste disposal levy make the levy a tax?***

- The waste levy remains a levy, and it is correct that the Government has broadened the use of the levy to support a wider range of environmental outcomes.
- A large proportion of the levy continues to be invested in waste related outcomes, both by Central Government and local authorities.
- There are various examples in Australia of waste levies being invested across outcomes beyond waste.

## Waste Minimisation Fund

- The Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF) reopened in October 2024 with updated priorities and processes.
- Investment priorities focus on infrastructure to support diversion of:
  - organics,
  - construction and demolition waste,
  - plastics from landfill, through improved sorting, separation, resource recovery and processing.
- An annual quantum of funding of \$30 million for the WMF was confirmed as part of Budget 25.
  - Since reopening, the WMF has received 66 enquiries totalling \$244 million.
  - Of these, 26 are currently progressing to full application, equating to \$62 million worth of applications.
  - These projects cover all waste streams, and would ultimately benefit the entire country with multiple nationwide initiatives alongside several local projects such as in the Hauraki, Taranaki, Tairāwhiti and Marlborough regions.

## **Funding ERP2 and Waste Emissions**

- Waste is responsible for approximately 9 percent of methane emissions and 4 percent of total NZ emissions.
- Waste emissions have steadily decreased over the past decade or so due to flattening out in waste volumes and improved waste management (e.g. gas capture).
- New Zealand's Second Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP2) has two policies focused on improving further reducing waste emissions:
  - Use of the Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF) to support organic waste projects (1 megatonne over the Second Emissions Budget (EB2)).
  - Improved management of organic waste and landfill gas capture (0.80.8 megatonnes over EB2).
- These policies remain in implementation ahead of EB2 period starting next year.

## **Why did the Government cut WMF funding in the budget and how is it now going to achieve its ERP2 goals for WMF?**

- The Government has continued to incrementally increase the waste levy.
- Last year we expanded the use of the levy to support a wider range of environmental activities, as well as set aside dedicated funding to clean up old landfills, contaminated sites and for emergency waste clean up.
- At the same time, we have retained a significant allocation of WMF funding for the purpose of waste investments, the bulk of which will target organic waste and methane emissions as per the policy set out in ERP2.

***What impact will the reversal of the kerbside organics policy have on expected emissions?***

- Modest. Most of the councils in major centres have already introduced, or are in the process of introducing, organic kerbside services.
- The additional population and emissions that would have been captured through mandating would have been relatively modest and needed to be considered against the costs to councils and ratepayers (note, if pushed on the abatement impact could pass to the Ministry for more detail).

## Securing the Future of Catchment Groups

- Catchment groups are crucial for implementing Freshwater Farm Plans and the National Direction for Freshwater Management and Indigenous Biodiversity. Their invaluable work in environmental management, fostering connections, and driving practical activities must be recognised, especially as many funding arrangements end this financial year.
- To ensure seamless continuity, the Ministry for the Environment has proactively implemented an interim funding arrangement for relevant groups currently receiving support under the Jobs for Nature programme, acknowledging the need for future collaboration once the reform programme is clearer. With a value of \$6.4 million, the funding extension is helping to sustain and empower close to 300 catchment groups across New Zealand.
- In the coming year, the Ministry for the Environment, in collaboration with other agencies, will explore longer-term funding opportunities for catchment groups.
- This will be part of a broader effort to consolidate investment activities into a new Environment Investment Fund, focusing on high-quality, integrated investment management and robust prioritisation to improve environmental outcomes, with catchment groups being one of the key topics considered.

## **04 Data and Reporting**

### **Environment and Climate Reporting**

- As the Government's lead advisor on environmental matters, the Ministry for the Environment delivers a range of statutory reports on our natural and built environment.
- These reports rely on data sourced from multiple providers, which undergoes rigorous assurance processes to ensure it is fit for purpose and is trusted.
- This foundation of high-quality evidence supports informed action on environmental challenges and opportunities, and flows into policy and operational decision making to:
  - support economic growth and infrastructure development,
  - deliver effective resource management outcomes, and
  - help us manage risks, including how we adapt to climate change.
- Environmental reporting is about how people shape the environment, and how those changes in turn affect our economy, homes, livelihoods, health and quality of life.

### **Prioritising data and evidence**

- There is some concern regarding the age of data sets at time that they are provided. For example, universities and Crown Research Institutes take time to complete the data sets including quality assurance and reporting. This process typically takes 2 years after last data point collected.
- For many indicators, environmental trends and changes over time are often only detectable over a long term (5-10yr) period. I would rather focus attention on data coverage and quality as opposed to just producing reports of questionable value that do not provide useful insight for decision-makers.

- The reality of environmental reporting is that it is heavily reliant on manual processes. I am looking forward to the ERA amendments enabling more timely reporting.
- Strengthening data accessibility and standardisation, alongside amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act 2015, will ensure that decision-makers can access timely, assured, and relevant environmental evidence, supporting smarter investment and policy design for long-term resilience.
- There is also ongoing work to determine core indicators that could be prioritised for the ERA reporting as well as to set environmental limits to be used in RM.
- Waste is one area where we have been able to build our datasets and track trends in a relatively real time manner.
- Since expanding the levy to cover a broader set of landfills, we now have data that can be tracked via the dashboard that has been developed for MfE's website. The dashboard is interactive and allows users to view data from multiple perspectives, including by landfill type and over different time periods.
- It is updated quarterly so provides something very close to a real time picture of waste data.

## Value and impact of our science investment

- Science, Innovation and Technology (SIT) is one of the pillars of the Government's 'Going for Growth' programme.
- SIT system reforms present a significant opportunity to improve the quality of, and access to information, which can unlock economic growth and foster long-term economic resilience.
- Better data enables appropriate quantification of risk and smarter decision-making, increasing investor confidence and reducing future costs.
- Data and evidence for reporting under the ERA 2015 is prioritised through a long-term indicator plan, as well as through the ministry wide Data, Science and Evidence Investment plan.
- These priorities were set through a science review of the environmental indicators to determine the relative need for prioritising data procurements.
- The Ministry for the Environment invested \$14.7m into improving environment and climate information in the year to 30 June 2024, including:
  - evidence to support its statutory reporting obligations (\$5.7m, or 39 percent of the total),
  - environmental data systems improvements (\$4.8m, 33 percent),
  - direct policy evidence (\$3.0m, 20 percent), and
  - costs associated with science governance, assurance, and strategic partnerships (\$1.2m, 8 percent).
- Examples include projects to improve our national waste strategy, such as the food and garden waste collection project (\$223,502), which addressed key information gaps on the amount of food scraps collected in kerbside collections, and peoples' attitudes and behaviour in relation to such collections.

- The Ministry for the Environment's science budget is a small part of New Zealand's overall environment and climate research funding. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's most recent estimate of national environmental research expenditure (for 2018/19) showed that central government and regional councils spent \$427-\$516 million, while the Ministry spent only \$4.1-\$4.6 million - about 1 percent of the total.

### **Updated River Water Quality Data**

- NIWA currently provides science services to support the monitoring and dissemination of data from the National River Water Quality Network. This is funded in part by the Strategic Science Investment Fund and by MfE.
- MfE co-funded the collection and dissemination of this data after NIWA raised cost-pressure concerns with central agencies and the regional sector.
- MfE's decision was informed by feedback from affected stakeholders indicating that the data collected was of significant value and ceasing monitoring would have a significant impact on councils and national level reporting.
- NIWA's operations funded by MfE include the ongoing monitoring of 16 sites which are re-agreed annually.

## Long-Term Insights Briefing

- The Ministry for the Environment, in partnership with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), is also working on a Long-Term Insights Briefing with the draft title *‘How can New Zealand enhance its resilience to hazards from 2035 and beyond’*.
- The Briefing is expected to be released before the end of the year and will explore ways New Zealand can improve its economic, social and environmental resilience to hazards.
- The Ministry for the Environment has prioritised efforts to ensure the right information is available to those making the most critical choices—whether in resource management, infrastructure planning, climate adaptation, or hazard mitigation.

## **Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's reports**

### **'A federated system to improve environmental information'**

- The PCE has noted the importance of geospatial data to inform “place-based” decision-making and highlighted that there is work to do to standardise and collect this data into a coherent picture of the environment and how it is being used.
- The PCE's proposals for a federated system and the development of a collective work programme have been noted and will be considered as the Government progresses its policy thinking and design.
- I have recently met with my Ministerial colleagues to discuss the value of taking a more coordinated and federated approach to environmental data to improve data access and standardisation, as proposed by the PCE.
- This is a practical and scalable way to improve data access, interoperability, standardisation and long-term resilience.
- This work aligns with the reform of the Science, Innovation and Technology system. We are currently awaiting advice from Officials on a lead coordinating agency and steering group.

### **'Urban ground truths – valuing soil and subsoil in urban development'**

- Released March 2024. The Report found that new residential developments may not have enough healthy soil to support e.g. stormwater filtering and storage, heat mitigation, and air filtration, and it made recommendations for better protection of soil including:
  - National guidance should be provided on urban soil.

- Incentives to encourage developers to conserve and protect soil and reuse soils on site where possible.
- Prior planning for stormwater management for urban growth using tools such as integrated management catchment plans.
- The new resource management system may provide better recognition of urban soils.
- The waste and resource efficiency work programme – 2024 to 2026 – identifies that we will work with industry to identify options to help manage surplus soil generated through construction and infrastructure projects.
- Additionally, in 2023, the Ministry allocated funding to invest in resilience planning to help mitigate impacts of future severe weather events. One of these studies includes an urban soil feasibility study to understand potential solutions to ameliorate compacted urban soils to reduce flood risk. An outcome will include publishing draft technical guidance detailing feasibility of potential solutions for implementation by the construction industry.

## Environmental Reporting Act Amendments

- The Environmental Reporting Act (ERA) was enacted by the last National Government in 2015 as a manifesto commitment. New Zealand was the last OECD country to implement a statutory environmental reporting regime.
- The ERA plays an important role in ensuring that robust and credible environmental data and research is made available to the public and decision-makers.
- It is a focused package of nine amendments that together achieve the objectives of:
  - clarifying the role of the ERA in producing independent, regular and trustworthy reporting on the state of the environment,
  - addressing legislative barriers to the efficiency and effectiveness of the reporting programme,
  - supporting effective programme implementation and minimising cost burdens, particularly for local government, and
  - mandating good practice of environmental reporting to safeguard the nature and scope of the reporting programme.
- The combined effect of these proposals will:
  - increase the efficiency of the reporting programme,
  - improve data quality, and make data more accessible and more useful,
  - ensure that reports provide timely, focused insights that inform the development of policy and action,
  - provide better guidance on strengthening data and environmental research, without placing additional burdens or compliance obligations on data collectors.

- The Ministry for the Environment proactively released the ERA Amendments Cabinet Paper, Regulatory Impact Assessment, and Cost Benefit Analysis on 29 May 2025.
- Officials are currently working with PCO on a draft bill and expect this to go to Select Committee in July.
- Subject to agreement, officials are aiming to have the bill ready for Cabinet by early- August.

# **Responses to Questions about the State of our Environment from the Report**

## **Air Quality**

- Air quality is improving at many monitoring sites, and emissions from motor vehicles are reducing due to vehicle and fuel improvements.
- As an example, air quality is improving in Arrowtown where harmful particle matter such as PM10 pollution dropped between 2016 and 2023.
- Updates to air quality indicators are being prioritised for air pollutant emissions, Human health impacts of PM2.5 and PM10 & Black carbon concentrations.
- The current National Direction on air quality recognises that the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NES-AQ) are due for an update.
- It is acknowledged that the NES Air Quality is out of step with current WHO guidelines on the impacts of poor air quality on human health.
- As you know, the Government has committed to making changes to the resource management system and we will consider changes to air quality as part of that broader programme of reform.

## **Breaches/ exceedances**

- As the Minister for the Environment, under the NES-Air Quality, I am only required to sign off breaches caused by exceptional circumstances (i.e. including salt-loaded air from storms).
- All other breaches must be publicly notified, and as the Minister for the Environment, I am only required to sign off breaches where councils are applying for the NES-Air Quality to be excluded.

## Economy

- The economy in New Zealand relies heavily on the natural environment, with our primary industries and tourism sector comprising a significant proportion of our export revenue that sustains our way of life.
- In the year ended June 2024, primary industries contributed \$53.3 billion to exports (MPI, 2024a). In the year ended March 2024, international tourism's contribution to total exports was \$16.9 billion (Stats NZ, 2025).
- The cost for our food and fibre sectors to recover from Cyclone Gabrielle is estimated to be between \$700 million and \$1.1 billion.
- The total cost of pests to New Zealand was estimated at \$9.2 billion in 2019/20, including primary sector losses of \$4.3 billion.

## Environment and Climate Reporting Statistics

- This year, the Ministry for the Environment released four reports providing critical insights that empower and drive meaningful change. Those reports are:
  - **‘Our Air 2024’** (a health check on air quality and its impact on daily life):
    - Key Messages: Emissions from motor vehicles are the biggest contributor to air pollution, but are reducing due to vehicle and fuel improvements. Air pollution continues to cause health impacts and contributes to socio-economic costs in some areas.
    - Released 9 October 2024.
  - **‘Our Environment 2025’** and its companion document **‘Our Environment, Our Lives: The stories behind the numbers’** (an overview of environmental assets and liabilities):
    - Key Messages:
      - Our choices have impacts that both positively and negatively affect the environment and in turn our economy and livelihood, health, quality of life, and connection to place.
      - The report shows that whilst there is cause for ongoing concern about aspects of the environment, trends in some places are stabilising or reversing due to changes in the way we live our lives or specific interventions.
      - Robust evidence and data about our changing environment helps New Zealanders make the most informed decisions.
    - Released 8 April 2025.
  - **‘New Zealand’s first Biennial Transparency Report’** (a report on New Zealand’s: progress towards our Paris Agreement commitments;

policies and measures; current and projected emissions; adaptation action, and support provided to developing countries over 2021-22):

- Key Message: Despite New Zealand strengthening its climate target in 2021, the report shows a narrowing gap between the Nationally Determined Contribution 1 (NDC1) and projected domestic emissions.
  - Released 18 December 2024.
- **‘New Zealand’s Greenhouse Gas Inventory’** (annual report of all human-induced emissions and removals of greenhouse gases in New Zealand):
    - Key Message: The report shows that emissions fell in every sector in 2023 compared to 2022.
    - Released 15 April 2025.

## **Waste Data and Waste Volumes**

- After peaking in 2018/19, waste volumes have tended to flatten or even trend slightly downward (noting that we only have longstanding time series data for class 1 landfills, the main municipal landfills):
- For example, waste volumes were 746kg per capita in 2018/19 versus 615kg per capita in 2023/24 (for class 1 landfills)
- We only have 9 months of data for the 2024/25 year but at this stage it looks like volumes will probably be down across a range of landfill types, at least on a per capita basis.

## 05 EPA

### Agricultural and horticultural products regulatory review

- The Government agreed to accept all 16 recommendations of the Ministry for Regulation's regulatory review of approvals for Ag/Hort chemicals. The recommendations included both operational and legislative changes. The Ministry for the Environment is committed to implementing those recommendations and is working on a set of amendments to the HSNO Act to be introduced to the House within the next few months.
- Eleven of the 16 recommendations of the review relate to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA is working through these recommendations, in accordance with the priorities I have set.
- The balance of the recommendations related to the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act, that MPI is responsible for. Officials are working jointly in implementing the review recommendations.
- The recommended Sector Leaders Forum has already been established and held its first meeting in April. The Forum will be a key mechanism to track the implementation of the recommendations.
- I have set a target of a 10 percent reduction to the queue of unprocessed applications next financial year, with a more ambitious target once additional staff are on board. I am pleased to see that the EPA has reduced the queue by 21 percent this financial year.
- The EPA is currently consulting with applicants, industry groups, and stakeholders on criteria for prioritising applications to most effectively use its resources and achieve the greatest benefits for New Zealand.

- I am seeking to gain more leverage from international assessments, which could significantly reduce duplication and speed up approvals. We're doing this through the legislative amendments.
- The review recommended the EPA update its risk assessment models, which has not been possible within baseline funding. I secured \$10 million (\$5m each year over two years), through the Waste Minimisation Fund, for this new modelling in Budget 2025.
- The Ministry for the Environment and the EPA are also working on legislative changes to give effect to six of the recommendations. These are:

### **Legislative Amendments**

- **Recommendation 4:** Make regulatory systems easier to navigate MfE and EPA are working with MPI and NZFS to align and simplify the HSNO and ACVM systems for applicants.
- **Recommendation 7:** Use international regulator assessments  
*Making greater use of international data in risk assessments, especially under the HSNO Act.*
- **Recommendation 9:** Explore strategic priority pathway  
*Proposal for a new time-limited conditional approval pathway.*
- **Recommendation 11:** Review HSNO cost recovery provisions  
*Proposing a levy system to better fund general regulatory functions under HSNO.*
- **Recommendation 13:** Improve performance reporting and review statutory timeframes  
*Reviewing HSNO timeframes and enhancing performance reporting mechanisms.*

- **Recommendation 16:** Review emergency approval provisions under HSNO

*MfE is leading legislative changes to improve emergency approvals, with EPA support.*

### **Non-legislative Actions**

- **Recommendation 1:** Formation of a Sector Leaders Forum  
MfE and EPA collaborated with MPI to establish a forum for strategic leadership and coordination across regulatory systems.
- **Recommendation 10:** Update EPA risk assessment models  
EPA is receiving \$10M in funding to modernise its outdated ecotoxicological risk models.

## HSNO progress

- I am pleased that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has been able to reprioritise existing funding to create a new hazardous substances assessments team and I am informed that offers for thirteen additional roles have been made, with the majority of staff starting in June. These additions increase the team by a third.
- The additional roles are:
  - 1 Principal advisor
  - 1 Team leader
  - 1 Senior advisor ecotoxicology
  - 1 Senior advisor toxicology
  - 3 Senior advisor applications
  - 4 Advisor applications
- Once onboarded and trained, all 13 of the new staff will be directly involved in assessing applications currently in the queue. This includes the team leader role, who in addition to people management responsibilities, holds delegated statutory decision-making powers for some aspects of the application process.

These 13 new staff increase the overall Hazardous Substances assessments team by one third. Once recruitment is complete, there will be 16 staff trained in toxicology or ecotoxicology/environmental-fate available to work on HS assessments.

The reduction in the queue is influenced by both output and the number of applications lodged. This financial year the EPA has already approved 55 new hazardous substances equating to a 21% reduction of the backlog and is on track to be the highest number of approvals since 2018/19.

## **Genetic modification**

- The Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology, Dr Shane Reti is leading reform to liberalise genetic modification settings that currently sit under the HSNO Act.
- The Gene Technology Bill aims to establish a new regulatory regime for gene technology and genetically modified organisms in New Zealand.
- The legislation proposes an independent statutory officer at the EPA. It is proposed the new regulator is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2025. Questions on funding of the proposed regulator should be directed to the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology.
- This work would result in a new stand-alone piece of legislation – separate to the HSNO Act.
- The Ministry for the Environment has seconded 2 staff into MBIE to assist with this work.
- The Ministry advised the Minister for the Environment through the development of policy prior to it being considered by Select Committee.
- The Gene Technology Bill passed its first reading on December 17 2024.

## **Fast-track**

### **COVID Fast-track**

- The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) received 120 applications under the COVID Fast-track regime.
- All applications are complete, with the exception of one that has been suspended for outstanding debt, which is being pursued through legal proceedings.
- The average time from lodgement to a decision for Listed projects was 88 working days. The average time from lodgement to a decision for Referred projects was 99 working days.

### **NBEA Fast-track**

- Ten applications for referral have been made under the now-repealed Natural and Built Environment Act.
- I have referred six applications, and there are another four applications yet to be decided.
- Of the six referred, four substantive applications have been and are currently with panels for consideration. These are:
  - Glorit Solar Farm
  - Pahiatua Wind Farm
  - SH1 - Cambridge to Piarere Long Term Improvements project
  - Annies Way Solar Farm

## Fast-track Approvals Act

- Good progress is being made across both stages of the Fast-track process. As an applicant-led process, the pipeline is driven by applicants, and a steady stream of referral applications continues to come into the Ministry for the Environment.
- All applications received are being actively processed, and all statutory deadlines are being met.
- To date, 15 projects have also applied to the Environmental Protection Authority for expert panels to be established on their substantive applications. **Note that this sentence is incorrect and should read: To date, the EPA has determined that 15 applications are complete and within scope.**
- Three of these applications are already with expert panels for consideration and decision, with the first decisions anticipated before December 2025. **Note that this sentence is incorrect and should read: Six of these applications are already with expert panels for consideration and decision, with the first decisions expected in August 2025.**
- In addition to the 149 projects listed in Schedule 2 of the Act that can proceed straight to the expert panel process, the first three referral applications requiring a decision from the Minister for Infrastructure on whether they may proceed further through the Fast-track process have been approved.
- These projects are not listed in Schedule 2 of the Act and must therefore pass the initial threshold. The Minister for Infrastructure must be satisfied that each is an infrastructure or development project with significant regional or national benefits and is eligible under the Act.
- The EPA entered into a \$10 million loan agreement with the Crown. The purpose of the loan was to support the implementation of the Fast-track regime under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. In June, the EPA made its first six-monthly interest payment of \$208,000 to the Treasury. The EPA has raised sufficient levies from applicants to make this payment.

## **Role of the Minister to comment on Fast-track applications**

- As the Minister for the Environment, I am one of the parties that is invited to comment on all applications, both referral and substantive, under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. In doing so, I am taking into account the statutory considerations for the relevant decision-makers at each stage in the process.
- I am commenting where I feel that in my role as the Minister for the Environment I can add value to the process. In most cases, however, local councils, the applicants, other Ministers, and iwi or hapū are in the best position to resolve local or regional matters.

## **Environmental Protection Authority Governance**

### **Board Appointments**

- Five new members were appointed to the Board of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in September and October 2024 (Alison Stewart, Jen Scoular, Barry O’Neil, Nancy Tuaine, Brett O’Riley), and Barry O’Neil took up the Chair role in February 2025.
- Nancy Tuaine resigned from her role on the Board on 21 May 2025. A call for nominations (from the public, nominating agencies and Ministerial colleagues) to seek a suitable replacement will shortly commence.
- The term expiry of two Board members will be considered in 2026 (Deputy Chair Paul Connell, Mary-Anne Macleod).

### **Financial performance**

- In 2023/24, the EPA delivered a \$3.551 million deficit, which was favourable to the budgeted deficit of \$3.982 million.
- The EPA entered into a \$10 million loan agreement with the Crown. The purpose of the loan was to support the implementation of the Fast-track regime under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. In June, the EPA made its first six-monthly interest payment of \$208,000 to the Treasury. The EPA has raised sufficient levies from applicants to make this payment.
- The EPA is forecasting delivery of a \$0.308 million surplus in 2024/25, which is favourable to the budgeted breakeven position.
- In 2025/26 the EPA is budgeting for a \$3.545 million surplus. This will be reflected in the EPA’s 2025/26 Statement of Performance Expectations, which will be finalised by 30 June 2025.

## Risks

- The primary risk for the EPA remains its ability to effectively deliver its statutory functions within the baseline funding available. To mitigate this risk, the EPA has undertaken an organisational restructure to reduce staffing levels, reduced its reliance on contractors and consultants, restricted new recruitment and backfilling, downscaled community outreach programmes, and limited long-term investments.
- The EPA is not in a position to take on additional functions (e.g., because of legislative change) without additional funding or further reprioritising existing work programmes.
- The EPA has not been able to process the volume of hazardous substances applications it receives in a timely manner and there is now a queue of unprocessed applications. The EPA is working to improve the efficiency of its hazardous substances functions, reduce the queue, and respond to the recommendations of the Ministry for Regulation's review of agricultural and horticultural product approvals (as far as existing funding allows).
- The New Zealand Emissions Trading Register operated by the EPA, is nearing its end of life. Policy decisions that rely on an updated Register will not have their intended impact until it is replaced. A Register replacement will require significant Government investment and will take several years. Decisions will be required in advance of the expiry of the Register's current IT support contract in 2029. Ministers are currently considering options for the future of the Register. The EPA's objective is to keep the current Register operational, and it will keep Ministers apprised of any emerging risks.
- The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment is leading policy work on the establishment of the new gene technology regulatory regime. As per

the current draft legislation, the EPA is set to take on the gene technology regulator function. Questions regarding functions or funding should be referred to the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation, Hon Shane Reti. I have nothing further to add at this stage.

## **06 RM Stat functions**

### **Ministerial responsibilities for freshwater**

- Minister Bishop is responsible for Resource Management system reform (including progressing changes to national direction).
- Minister Hoggard has specific responsibilities for water storage, farm plans and the National Environmental Standards for Drinking Water (NES-DW).
- As the Minister for the Environment, I am responsible for administration of the current RMA - e.g. applications from regional councils regarding exemptions to enable them to progress freshwater plan changes, Water Conservation Orders (WCO).

## **Water Conservation Orders**

### ***Ngaruroro Water Conservation Order***

- I recently received the Environment Court's recommended Water Conservation Order (WCO) for the Ngaruroro River.
- As the Minister for the Environment, I must accept or reject this recommendation (per s214 of the RMA).
- I haven't received advice from officials on the Environment Court's recommendations yet. So I cannot comment further.

### ***Water Conservation Orders in the new system***

- This is something that Minister Bishop can address, but my understanding is that decisions on Water Conservation Orders in the new system have not been taken.

## **Exemptions to the moratorium on notifying freshwater planning instruments (FPIs)**

- As the Minister for the Environment, I am receiving advice from the Ministry for the Environment on applications from councils seeking an exemption from the Freshwater Planning Instrument notification moratorium.
- Applications will be where a council wishes to proceed with a plan to address unintended consequences of the pause.
- To date three councils (Canterbury, Southland and Tasman), have expressed interest in progressing an exemption.
- Environment Canterbury (ECan) has sought advice on using the exemption pathway to progress parts of proposed Plan Change 8 of its Land and Water Regional Plan.
- I understand ECan is considering its position on the matter and how to proceed.

## Otago Regional Council Land and Water Regional Plan

- The Otago Regional Council (ORC) had planned to notify a new Land and Water Regional Plan in October 2024. However, the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Bill paused the notification of freshwater planning instruments.
- Councillors wrote to me to request a legislative amendment to address unintended consequences from the ORC being unable to notify its plan as scheduled.
- The Ministry for the Environment has met with the ORC to explore the exemption process. Discussions to resolve this matter are ongoing.
- Decisions are with Cabinet.

## **Environment Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan**

- Environment Canterbury (Ecan) has sought advice on using the exemption pathway to progress parts of proposed Plan Change 8 of its Land and Water Regional Plan.
- I understand Ecan is considering its position on the matter and how to proceed.

## **ECan notified consents**

Do you agree with Associate Environment Minister that the consenting experience facing some high-country Canterbury sheep and beef farms is "bloody tragic"?

## **Nitrates in ground water and Canterbury dairy boom**

- We are already consulting on proposals to amend National Direction for freshwater, and will be requiring councils to balance multiple objectives while safeguarding the health of freshwater.
- Changes include improvements for drinking water protections, requiring councils to map source water areas.

## **Section 70 and significant adverse effects**

Will changes to s70 lead to significant adverse effects on aquatic life?

- No. Changes will only allow councils to permit activities where it is consistent with improvement.
- These changes only relate to situations where a) receiving water bodies are already experience adverse effects, and b) a council is satisfied a permitted activity rule and its conditions will contribute to improvement.
- Nothing forces the council to permit such activities.

## **National Monitoring System**

- The National Monitoring System (NMS) collects information annually from all 78 councils on a number of matters to assist with performance monitoring of councils (including measures on consenting and planning processes).
- The NMS will be reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the new resource management regulatory system.

## **Severe weather recovery / Orders in Council**

- There are currently nine Orders in Council (OICs) in effect, for which I, as the Minister for the Environment, am the relevant Minister.
- These OICs are supporting affected communities to recover from the severe weather events of 2023 through providing temporary changes to legislation like the Resource Management Act 1991.
- The OICs support recovery by, for example, speeding up flood works in critical locations, enabling temporary accommodation, and supporting waste management through a levy exemption.
- All OICs will expire on or before 31 March 2028.
- The Ministry for the Environment is undertaking a review of the OICs for which I am the relevant Minister, to help ensure they are working as intended.

## **Wairoa Rapid Review**

- An independent review of flooding in Wairoa (following the 26 June 2024 flood event) was completed, and recommendations published.
- A Crown Manager has been appointed to the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and the Wairoa District Council. Their role has, and continues to be, the oversight of the progress and delivery of flood protection for Wairoa as well as relationship stabilisation between the councils and iwi. This partnership has collaborated in developing an 'Intermediate Management Plan for the Wairoa Bar,' which was announced on 23 May 2025.

### **Call in: Te Awamutu waste-to-energy plant**

- I called in this application as a nationally significant proposal and referred it to a Board of Inquiry on 17 August 2024.
- The Board will begin public hearings on 16 June 2025, which are scheduled to run until 4 July 2025.
- A decision on the application is due within nine months of public notification, unless the Board seeks an extension of time.

### **Call in: Waimate waste-to-energy plant**

- This application was called in by the previous Minister for the Environment and referred to the Environment Court on 31 August 2023.
- As the decision is a matter for the Environment Court, I am not involved in the process.

## **Streamlined Planning Processes, including Te Pūtahi Ladies Mile**

### **Variation in Queenstown**

- There have been no new applications for Streamlined Planning Processes (SPP) since I have been in this role.
- The previous Minister for the Environment agreed to a request by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) to make a Direction for a SPP for Te Pūtahi Ladies Mile Variation.
- I approved the Variation, which will enable approximately 2,400 new homes as part of a new neighbourhood in Queenstown in November 2024.
- I am aware that concerns have been raised about the capacity of the Shotover Wastewater Treatment Plant to accommodate this growth. I note that the QLDC and the Otago Regional Council (ORC) are working closely to resolve performance issues with the wastewater system. I also note that the growth in Ladies Mile is staged and based on appropriate infrastructure being in place.

### **Litigation where the Crown is party to Proceedings**

- I, as the Minister for the Environment, am party to declaratory proceedings brought jointly by North Canterbury Fish and Game Council (Fish and Game) and the Environmental Defence Society Incorporated (EDS) (the Applicants).
- The Applicants seek to clarify the statutory roles of Environment Canterbury (ECan) and the Minister for the Environment in relation to the monitoring and enforcement of the Rakaia Water Conservation Order. Crown Law represented me, as the Minister for the Environment, at the hearing. Parties are awaiting a ruling on the proceedings.

## Oceans

### EEZ Act and Fast-Track Approvals Act

- The exclusive economic zone is the area between 12 nautical miles from shore and 200 nautical miles from shore.
- As the Minister for the Environment, I am responsible for the administration of the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012 (EEZ Act). The day-to-day implementation of the Act is the responsibility of the EPA.
- Marine consents under the EEZ Act can be approved under the Fast-Track Approvals Act, with the exception of those related to:
  - Prohibited activities under the EEZ Act, eg, dumping of toxic and hazardous waste
  - Decommissioning, eg, oil and gas installations and infrastructure
  - Offshore renewable energy projects
- As the Minister for the Environment, I will be invited to comment on applications under the Fast-Track Approvals Act for activities taking place in the exclusive economic zone.

## **Kermadecs**

- The Government removed the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary Bill from the Order Paper in March 2024 and has stopped work on the proposed sanctuary.
- Opposition by iwi to the Bill reflected their concerns about the lack of engagement with iwi prior to its introduction, and that the enactment of the Bill would result in the inability of iwi/Māori to make use of fishing rights under the 1992 Fisheries Deed of Settlement and the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992 provided as redress to iwi/Māori in settlement of their commercial fishing claims.
- In June 2023, iwi fisheries organisations voted overwhelmingly to reject a proposal to amend the Bill at a meeting hosted by Te Ohu Kaimoana.
- Removing the Bill and stopping work on the Sanctuary poses limited risk to the marine environment. Few activities (including fishing) happen in the area, given the logistics associated with the distance from mainland New Zealand.
- Existing protections will remain in place. These include a marine reserve around the Kermadec Islands that extends out to 12 nautical miles, and restrictions on the use of bottom-impacting fishing methods.

## **Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill**

- The Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana Marine Protection Bill will establish 19 new marine protection areas to contribute to the restoration of the health and mauri of the Hauraki Gulf.
- In October 2024, the Minister of Conservation, Hon Tama Potaka, announced that Cabinet agreed to pass the Bill into law with amendments. One of these amendments includes a provision for limited commercial ring net fishing in two of the high protection areas (where all other commercial and recreational fishing is prohibited).
- The Bill completed its second reading in December 2024. The next step is the Committee of the Whole House where the amendments will be considered.
- As Minister for the Environment, I do not have responsibility for the Bill or its implementation. The Minister of Conservation is the lead.
- As Minister for the Environment, I am responsible for the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 which includes coastal marine environments like the Hauraki Gulf. The Minister of Conservation also has powers under the RMA for the coastal marine environment. The Bill does not make changes to the RMA.

## **Resource Management System Oversight**

- Providing stewardship of the current resource management system includes timely decision making on requests and applications for me to exercise my statutory functions and powers, such as:
  - calling in resource consents or plan changes as proposals of national significance and referring them to either the Environment Court or a Board of Inquiry,
  - approving new requiring authorities,
  - making directions for streamlined planning processes,
  - extending timeframes for local authority plan-making,
  - investigating, and making recommendations where required, on the exercise of local authorities of their functions, powers, and duties under the Resource Management Act 1991.

## **New Requiring Authority: Space Ops Ltd**

- In March 2025, I approved Space Ops Ltd as a new requiring authority for its ground satellite station in Awarua.
- This will enable Space Ops Ltd to designate the site for their radiocommunications operations to make it easier to update the technology as required.

## 07 Finance

### Vote Environment

Environment Departmental (excl Climate):

- 2025/26 budget of \$157.9m; an increase of \$13.9m from 2024/25 forecast of \$144.0m. The most significant changes were baseline decreases in 24/25:
  - \$30.9m drop in baseline funding following B24 savings.
  - \$38.9m uplift in B25 for the surge in RM Reform Phase 3 (mixture of new funding and reprioritisation).
  - \$6.0m B25 uplift in departmental waste-levy funded administration and waste/HSNO policy.

Environment Non-Departmental (excl Climate):

- 2025/26 budget of \$369.4m; an increase of \$12.8m from 2024/25 forecast of \$356.7m. This is primarily due to:
  - an increase of \$7m in tyre stewardship fee distribution as the product stewardship scheme only became operational (collecting tyres) from 1 September 2024.
  - an increase of \$36m in waste disposal levy disbursement to Territorial Local Authorities and the Waste Minimisation Fund, both due to an increase in forecast waste levy revenue collection.
  - a \$43m increase in the Environmental Investment Fund (\$20m for the Contaminated Sites & Vulnerable Landfills Fund, \$10m for Crown site liability reduction, \$13m revenue buffer).
  - a decrease of \$15m in Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme as it nears completion.

- a decrease of \$42m in Freshwater Funds as the Jobs for Nature programme nears completion.
- a decrease of \$15m for the reducing emissions from waste category (now funded via the WMF).

## What impact have savings had on the Ministry's funding?

The combined impact on the Ministry's funding from Budget 2024 and Budget 2025 is as follows:

- **Departmental Funding** – a forecast reduction of 32.2% by 2028/29, compared to 2023/24 actuals (updated for BEFU25).
- **Non-Departmental Funding (Crown)** – a forecast reduction of 63.3% by 2028/29, compared to 2023/24 actuals (updated for BEFU25).

\$m	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
	(Actual)	*	*	*	*	*
Departmental Appropriations	240.0	191.1	208.0	189.2	156.6	162.8
Non-Departmental (Crown excl ETS)	165.5	148.3	78.0	66.7	61.6	60.8
Non-Departmental (product stewardship)	2.8	57.3	64.5	66.0	68.8	68.4
Non-Departmental (waste levy funded)	106.0	177.0	259.8	226.2	242.0	263.8
<b>Total Appropriations (excl ETS)</b>	<b>514.2</b>	<b>573.7</b>	<b>610.2</b>	<b>548.1</b>	<b>528.9</b>	<b>555.8</b>

\*As at Budget 25 (BEFU 2025/26).

*[Please refer to the detailed A4s and supporting crib sheets for a detailed breakdown of funding movements.]*

## How much does the Ministry spend on contractors and consultants?

The table below details contractor and consultant spend by the Ministry:

\$m	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Forecast
Total cost	16.747*	23.42	28.6	37.1	23.1	13.5

*\*Revised total in line with updated PSC guidance.*

- The Ministry has spent \$5.28 million on contractors and consultants for the nine months ending 31 March 2025. It is forecast to spend \$13.5m total by 30 June 2025.
- Detailed information on the contractors and consultants engaged in 2024/25, including information about tendering, will be provided to the Committee as part of the 2024/25 Annual Review of the Ministry in December 2025.

## Is the Ministry's payment of policy contractors in line with the MBIE guidance on maximum rates?

- Yes. The Ministry follows MBIE's guidance on the maximum rates of policy contractors.
- Current hiring processes ensure contractor rates are checked against current maximums as communicated by MBIE.

## How much does the Ministry spend on litigation?

- The Ministry does not differentiate litigation costs from other general legal expenditure in its accounts.
- *[We would need to revert to the Committee post-hearing if this question is asked.]*

## What funding does the Ministry provide to NGOs?

- Funding to NGOs for 2023/24 and 2024/25 (to 31 December 2024) is shown in the table below:

NGO	2023/24	2024/25
	12 mths to 30.6.24 (\$)	6 Mths to 31.12.24 (\$)
Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Incorporated	200,000	-
New Zealand Fish and Game Council	225,339	-
Environmental Defence Society	343,883	33,860
Para Kore Marae Incorporated	1,290,404	124,458
Environment Hubs Aotearoa Incorporated	1,410,150	211,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,469,776</b>	<b>369,318</b>

## Funding for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) toward the Paris Agreement

- The UNFCCC is the entity that provides the Secretariat that supports the global climate change response, including in respect of the Paris Agreement. This contribution is paid once a year against the appropriation, and this amount varies each year depending on the agreed outcome of the budget negotiations and due to exchange rate fluctuations.
- New Zealand has contributed \$201,822 in the current financial year (2024/25) to the UNFCCC core budget. Contributions for the previous four financial years are detailed below:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Framework Convention on Climate Change	153,744	305,852	171,532	205,449	201,882

- In addition to New Zealand’s annual UNFCCC core budget contribution, New Zealand can also contribute to the UNFCCC Trust Fund for Supplementary Activities on an ad-hoc and voluntary basis.

## 08 People

### General Statement – work programme

- The Ministry reset its work programme for 2024/25 to align with the Government's priorities and savings targets, and has continued to deliver significant work across the Environment and Climate portfolios. These achievements include:
  - Launching the Government's strategy to reduce waste and improve its management in New Zealand. The strategy sets out the Government's approach to reducing the environmental and economic harm caused by waste.
  - Confirming the waste work programme to help achieve the strategy's goals.
  - Beginning two waste-related consultations: the first for new waste legislation and the second on proposed regulations to improve the way waste from commonly-used farm plastic products is managed. Both of these consultations close on 1 June 2025.
  - Beginning or completing remediation of the following sites/landfills through the Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund:
    - Peel Forest (\$6m, Timaru District),
    - Tāhunanui Back Beach (\$3.4m, Nelson),
    - Project Reclaim (\$3m, Waitaki District).

- Releasing, in conjunction with Stats NZ, 'Our Environment 2025'. The latest three-yearly state of the environment report.
  - Delivering regulatory relief through Orders in Council under the Severe Weather legislation to speed up flood protection works in Auckland and Hawke's Bay (in effect end of September 2024).
  - Delivering a longer period of regulatory relief for farmers in the Hawke's Bay needing to undertake recovery works on rural properties following Cyclone Gabrielle (in effect end of Sept 2024).
  - Starting developing legislation to amend the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 to improve the quality of data produced under the Act and to make environmental reporting more efficient and useful.
- Operating model and restructure decisions are the responsibility of the Secretary for the Environment.

## How has the Ministry's staffing changed?

- In 2023/24, the Ministry was funded for 1,230 FTE.
- At 1 November 2024 (when the Ministry's new structure took effect), funding reduced to 836 FTE:
  - 708 permanent FTE
  - 128 fixed-term FTE
- Subsequent decisions allowed for 26 contingency-funded roles in Resource Management Reform and Fast-track Consenting – taking the total FTE to 862.
- At 28 February 2025, the Ministry has:
  - 714 permanent FTE.
  - 77 fixed-term FTE. Many of these roles will come to an end on or before 30 June 2025.
- At 30 April 2025, the Ministry has:
  - 714 permanent FTE.
  - 64 fixed-term FTE. Many of these roles will come to an end on or before 30 June 2025.

## How will the Ministry's staffing change in the future?

- Future FTE numbers may change depending on the outcomes of internal business planning which is yet to be finalised.
- New funding has been provided in Budget 2025 to deliver RMA replacement over the next two years. This will fund approximately 70 new fixed-term roles in 2025/26, dropping to about 60 new fixed-term roles in 2026/27. These roles will help support the work going on at a fast pace now, to get the two Bills introduced into the house by the end of this year.
- A number of these roles have already been appointed. We will begin recruiting for other, mainly specialist roles, soon.
- This process is separate from last year's change programme.

## What impact has the reduction in staffing had on work programme delivery?

- The Ministry reset its work programme for 2024/25 to align with the Government's cost savings expectations and priorities.
- The Ministry has also updated its strategic framework and Strategic Intentions (published in February 2025) and is updating its performance measures.

## What organisational reviews have driven staffing changes at the Ministry?

**There have been two organisation-wide reviews:**

### *Operating Model Phase 1 Review (2023):*

- The outcomes of Phase 1 of the Operating Model Review were implemented on 1 December 2023 and resulted in a new business group structure, a smaller senior leadership team (Tiers 2 and 3), and a blueprint for transforming our ways of working.
- 13 permanent roles at Tiers 2 and 3 were disestablished, mainly through the early ending of fixed-term or secondment arrangements.

### *Operating Model Phase 2 Review (2024):*

- Phase 2 of the Operating Model Review involved a whole-of-Ministry reset driven in large part by the Government's cost savings initiatives coupled with the Ministry's already declining baseline.
- The resulting structure, informed by the principles of the operating model, was implemented on 1 November 2024 and as a result:
  - 120.1 permanent roles were disestablished.
  - 148 fixed-term contracts were ended early.
  - 128 fixed-term roles were created most of which would end on 30 June 2025. 81 of these were filled by permanent staff entitled to delayed redundancy at the end of the fixed term.
- Under these decisions, permanent funded FTE was due to reduce to 714 FTE at 30 June 2025.

## **What further organisational change is planned?**

- The Ministry is mindful that its baseline decline is set to generally continue over time, and in line with this the Ministry anticipates further reductions in FTE (noting that we have some new short-term funding to deliver RMA replacement legislation).
- The Ministry intends to use cost-neutral mechanisms to help achieve anticipated future reductions, such as holding vacancies and ending fixed-term roles early, as well as targeted formal change processes should this be necessary.

## **What redundancies has the Ministry made, and how much did these cost?**

- There are 278 expected redundancies following the Ministry's recent change process and restructure which took effect on 1 November 2024.
- This includes 197 permanent staff members who have already taken redundancy and left the Ministry. Of these:
  - 156 were voluntary
  - 41 were not placed or opted out of the process
- A further 81 permanent staff members accepted delayed redundancy via new fixed-term contracts, most of which end in June 2025. (At 30 April 2025 we had 72 staff remaining in a delayed redundancy role.)
- This number may reduce if these staff members are reassigned into permanent roles that may become vacant, or they resign before the end of the fixed-term roles they may be filling.

## **How much has the Ministry spent on redundancies?**

- Actual redundancy costs to date resulting from the operating model changes are \$6.996m (\$1.485m in 2023/24 and \$5.511m as at 28 February 2025).
  - [Update: March and April 2025 paid out total = \$271,512.36, taking the total as at 30 April 2025 to \$5.783m]
- The Ministry is holding a provision of \$4.637m as of 28 February 2025 to cover delayed redundancies and equalisation costs.

## How has the Ministry sought to minimise redundancy costs?

- The Ministry avoided significant redundancy costs by taking steps in 2023 to hold unfilled about 230 funded roles, and employ most new staff on fixed term contracts.
- Through the savings-driven restructure in 2024 we ended many fixed term contracts early – avoiding a large number of redundancies.
  - The Ministry employed a cohort approach to selecting staff for its new structures so that it could redeploy staff according to skills, thereby minimising the number of staff that may need to be made redundant.
- Only once all other options were exhausted were redundancies made.
  - Expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy were only accepted if there were known reductions required in that cohort and there would not be a need to backfill in future.

## Ministry for the Environment's Performance Story

- The Ministry for the Environment published new Strategic Intentions (SI) in February 2025, reflecting its updated strategic framework.
- The SI firms up the Ministry's role and purpose as a lead advisor on the environment and climate. It identifies long-term outcomes that require contributions from all system partners, as well as the strategic priorities and impacts the Ministry is responsible for delivering on.
- The Ministry's next Annual Report (for 2024/25), due in October 2025, will reflect the changes made to the strategic framework and will report on performance against it.
- The Ministry is developing fewer, but more meaningful and enduring performance measures to track progress and ensure it is transparent and accountable.
- Progress towards Ministerial priorities is actively being monitored. Quarterly Ministerial Dashboards provide a progress update on all Ministerial priorities, risks and strategic outcomes.
- State of the Environment reporting shows New Zealanders where improvements are being made and where further work is needed.

## 09 Minister Bishop

### Phase 2 RMA Reforms - Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024

In October 2024 we passed our first RMA Amendment Act and made immediate changes to the RM system by:

- excluding the hierarchy of obligations in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) from consideration in resource consenting while a review and replacement of the NPS-FM is undertaken
- repealing the low slope map and associated requirements from stock exclusion regulations
- repealing the permitted and restricted discretionary activity regulations and associated conditions for intensive winter grazing in the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F). The Amendment Act replaces these with standalone regulations on riparian setback and critical source areas
- aligning the provisions for coal mining with other mineral extraction activities under the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB), NPS-FM and NES-F
- suspending for three years, requirements under the NPS-IB for councils to identify new Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) and include them in district plans and extending some SNA implementation timeframes
- streamlining the process for preparing and amending national direction, including national environmental standards, national planning standards, national policy statements, and the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement

- clarifying councils' ability to grant consents for discharges that would result in significant adverse effects, provided conditions reduce effects over time
- pausing the roll-out of freshwater farm plans until work to improve the system is finalised
- restricting notification of freshwater planning instruments (regional policy statements and plans that give effect to the NPS-FM 2020) until a new NPS-FM takes effect from 31 December 2025.
- This restriction allows for Ministerial exemption in certain circumstances, and a process is now in place enabling councils to apply to me, as the Minister for the Environment, for an exemption. To date three councils (Canterbury, Southland and Tasman), have expressed interest in progressing an exemption. Canterbury have provided an application, and I am considering Canterbury's request.

## **Phase 2 RMA Reforms – Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill**

- The Government is progressing a second RMA Amendment Bill to the RMA to deliver short- to medium-term impacts for system users.
- Key changes in the Bill include:
  - one-year consenting timeframes for renewable energy activities and wood processing facilities,
  - default consent duration of 35 years for renewable energy and certain types of long-lived infrastructure,
  - a 20-year extension for port coastal permits issued under section 384 of the RMA, and requiring authority status extended to ports operated under the Port Companies Act 1988,
  - amendments to section 70 of the RMA to ensure regional councils may include permitted activity discharge rules where standards will contribute to a reduction in cumulative effects over time,
  - enabling councils to opt out of the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) – though this has changed following the Select Committee process, which I will speak to in a moment,
  - reducing regulatory overlap between the RMA and the Fisheries Act 1996,
  - strengthening councils' ability to decline or apply conditions to consents where significant natural hazards are present,
  - improving emergency response provisions to enable more timely responses in the event of an emergency, including the introduction of a regulation-making power for the Minister for the Environment to respond to, or recover from, an emergency event,

- a suite of changes to improve the effectiveness of the RMA compliance and enforcement regime, including increases to penalties for offending under the RMA, and
- changes to improve consenting efficiency, including requiring that a council must not hold a hearing where it has sufficient information to make a decision.
- The Environment Committee reported back on the Bill just last week and some key improvements have been made by:
  - removing the ability for councils to opt-out of the MDRS and instead providing bespoke processes for Auckland and Christchurch City Councils to enable sufficient development capacity,
  - introducing criteria for decision makers to consider when the streamlined planning process is used to remove a building or heritage structure from a heritage schedule in a plan,
  - strengthening the role of the MPI Director General in pre-notification approval of plans (concurrence), so a proposed rule that controls fishing in an RMA plan cannot be notified if the MPI Director General determines the rule has a more than minor impact on fishing,
  - limit the circumstances where a Freshwater Farm Plan is required and when farm operators are required to submit their Freshwater Farm plan for certification,
  - remove a previous proposal that consent authorities must not hold a hearing if they have sufficient information to decide a consent application,
  - a range of other technical changes across to respond to submission feedback and improve workability of the Bill.
- The Bill is expected to pass into law before the end of 2025.

## Phase 2 RMA Reforms - National Direction

- As part of our work to make targeted changes to the system ahead of reforming the RMA, the Government is making a suite of changes to national direction.
- We recently launched consultation on four new and amendments to 12 existing national direction instruments under the RMA to support local decision-making in the form of national policy statements (NPS), national environmental standards (NES), and regulations under section 360 of the RMA.
- This includes delivering on the Government's commitment to replace the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Freshwater Management 2020 and the National Environmental Standards (NES) for Freshwater to better reflect the interests of all water users.
- These proposals have been designed with an intent to minimise the implementation burden for local government, as we progress replacing the RMA.
- Public consultation on the three packages opened on 29 May, and will run for 8 weeks until 27 July:
  - Package 1: Infrastructure and Development. This responds to the Government's commitments to make it easier to consent new infrastructure including renewable energy, to deliver 'Electrify NZ' commitments including supercharging electric vehicle infrastructure, and to make it easier to get more houses and granny flats built.
  - Package 2: Primary Sector. This responds to the Government's commitment to allow a broader range of productive rural activities under the NPS for Highly Productive Land, to remove regulations that impede the productivity and potential of the seafood sector, to reduce farming regulation and enhance primary sector including fish and

aquaculture, forestry, pastoral, horticulture and mining, and to make stock exclusion rules more practical.

- Package 3: Freshwater discussion documents. This seeks to better reflect the interests of all water users in national direction. It will address the current state of a system which is too complex and expensive to implement and has not delivered outcomes for freshwater that New Zealanders expect.

Public consultation on the fourth discussion document, Package 4: Going for Housing Growth was announced yesterday. It explores how urban policy proposed under Pillar 1 of Going for Housing Growth, originally anticipated to be implemented through amendments to the NPS on Urban Development, could be delivered in the new system.

- Once we've considered submissions on the proposals we'll make any necessary changes and have the majority of instruments gazetted by late 2025, with the remainder in early 2026.

## Package 1 National Direction – Infrastructure and Development

- The infrastructure and development package supports delivering the Government’s commitments to make it easier to consent new infrastructure, to deliver ‘Electrify NZ’ commitments, and to make it easier to get more houses and granny flats built.
- We’ve proposed new NESs for **granny flats and papakāinga** to support housing capacity. The granny flats NES is being progressed alongside a proposal to establish a building consent exemption for new simple standalone houses up to 70 square metres, subject to certain conditions.
- We’ve proposed a new NPS for **natural hazards** to support a standardised approach to natural hazard management, which we know costs both the Government when extreme weather events hit, and New Zealanders through increased insurance premiums.
- We’ve proposed a new NPS on **infrastructure** to better enable the development, upgrade, maintenance, operation and protection of publicly beneficial infrastructure (excluding renewable electricity generation and electricity networks).
- Amendments to the NPS on **Renewable Electricity Generation** are proposed to better enable the development, upgrade, maintenance, operation and protection of renewable electricity generation, which will help increase the security of electricity supply and reduce climate emissions.
- Amendments to the NPS on **Electricity Transmission** are proposed to widen the scope to cover electricity distribution and better enable the development, upgrade, maintenance, operation and protection of electricity networks in RMA decision-making.
- Proposed amendments to the NES on **Electricity Transmission Activities** will widen the scope to cover electricity distribution, reduce costs and

complexity, and enable the roll-out of public EV charging facilities through nationally consistent standards. All changes help support the electrification of the economy and reduce climate emissions.

- Proposed amendments to the NES for Telecommunications Facilities will keep it up to date with new technology and will reduce costs and complexity, for example by widening the scope of permitted activity standards.

## Package 3 National Direction – Freshwater

- The freshwater package contains proposals that, subject to public feedback, will form the basis for an exposure draft of the NPS-FM and NES-Freshwater later in the year.
- The proposals are to:
  - Require freshwater management to balance multiple objectives and provide for key outcomes such as vegetable growing and water storage, while safeguarding the health of freshwater.
  - Provide more direction on managing the scale and pace of change. Councils need to consider the cost impacts of meeting freshwater targets, and that long timeframes may be appropriate.
  - Rebalance Te Mana o te Wai to better reflect the importance of freshwater to all New Zealanders.
  - Focus management and monitoring of freshwater – we want councils to be able to manage only the contaminants that have an impact on freshwater in their region and set environmental limits appropriate to the catchments.
  - Simplify rules around wetlands and culverts to better balance protecting wetlands with incentivising wetland construction.
  - Further cut red tape for farmers by removing some stock exclusion requirements and making changes to fertiliser regulations.
  - Promote water storage and security.
  - Enable commercial vegetable growing. We want to direct councils to enable the continued domestic supply of commercial vegetable growing and remove the need for consent to allow crop rotation.

- Improving drinking water protections through mapping source-water, which is a low-cost improvement to council management of risks facing drinking water, and part of the ongoing response to the 2017 Havelock North Drinking Water Inquiry.

## **Implementation of Intensification Planning Instruments**

- High-growth councils were required to implement the intensification provisions in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) and the Medium Density Residential Standards through an intensification streamlined planning process.
- Most councils that were required to implement these provisions have done so or are anticipated to do so in the next few months.
- Auckland, Christchurch City and Waimakariri District Councils still have Intensification Planning Instruments (IPIs) in progress.
  - Auckland Council made decisions on parts of its IPI related to the city centre on 22 May 2025.
  - Christchurch referred 20 recommendations to the Minister Responsible for Resource Management Act Reform, Hon Chris Bishop, for decisions in relation to Policy 3 and 4 areas of the NPS-UD. Of the 20 recommendations, Minister Bishop accepted 3 of the Council referred recommendations, 14 of the IHP's recommendations and deferred 3 decisions until the Council has made decisions on the underlying zoning. These decisions were communicated to the Council on 5 June 2025.
- Decisions made on Wellington City Council's IPI were judicially reviewed, with the High Court dismissing the application.

### **Phase 3 RMA Reform**

- In Phase Three, the Government will introduce two Bills to replace the RMA that will separate land use planning and natural resource management – a Planning Bill and a Natural Environment Bill.
- The Planning Bill will focus on establishing a framework for planning and regulating the use, development, and enjoyment of land.
- The Natural Environment Bill will focus on establishing a framework for the use, protection, and enhancement of the natural environment.
- The new system will make it easier to build homes and infrastructure, strengthen enjoyment of property rights and will allow access to natural resources within limits.
- Policy work is well underway to introduce these two Bills into Parliament by the end of the year.

## Engagement with iwi/Māori on RM reform

- Throughout the resource management reform programme, officials have undertaken engagement with Pou Taiao, Te Tai Kaha, post-settlement governance entities, and other representative Māori groups. This will continue through Phase Three.
- Some of the engagement has admittedly been limited by the pace of policy development.
- However, Cabinet has committed to upholding Treaty settlements and related arrangements through the reform, and officials will continue to work closely with post-settlement governance entities to consider how relevant arrangements will work in the new system.
- Cabinet has invited me to report back before the introduction of replacement legislation on a proposed Treaty clause for each new Bill. We are currently working with officials on how a descriptive Treaty clause and associated provisions can reflect the Crown's Treaty obligations in the replacement legislation.

## 10 Minister Hoggard

### Freshwater farm plans - Associate Minister for the Environment

- Freshwater farm plans will be a key component of the new RM system for the farming sector.
- Work is well underway to improve freshwater farm plans and build an enduring, pragmatic, and cost-effective farm planning system.
- The Ministry for the Environment is currently engaging with key sectors on options to reduce the regulatory burden associated with farm plans. This includes better integrating the system with existing industry farm plan and assurance programmes and taking a more risk-based approach to freshwater farm plan certification, auditing and monitoring.
- It is important that councils and communities have confidence in the robustness of the freshwater farm plan system as an alternative to local rules and consents, where and when appropriate.
- We are working to finalise an improved freshwater farm plan system before the end of 2025.
- As the freshwater farm plan regulations were live in some regions, the Ministry for the Environment paused the requirement to develop a freshwater farm plan in most regions while system improvements are being developed.

## **Voluntary Carbon Market/Biodiversity Credit Market- Associate Minister for the Environment**

- The Government is considering opportunities to grow the voluntary carbon and nature markets in line with international best practices to ensure integrity.
- Voluntary carbon and nature markets present an opportunity to help mobilise finance towards projects that have climate and environmental benefits, while helping businesses and entities to meet voluntary commitments.
- The voluntary markets in New Zealand are currently small, fragmented, and unregulated, although since 2022 we have had interim guidance in place.
- New Zealand entities frequently buy voluntary credits, but these are mostly sourced internationally. I have directed officials to consider what barriers are preventing growth of a domestic supply of credits, not just for domestic purchasers but also international buyers, so that we can help direct private finance towards achieving our climate and environmental goals, alongside social and economic benefits.

## **Significant Natural Areas and the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity - Associate Minister for the Environment**

- The Government made a commitment to pause the identification of new Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) under the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) and to review their operation.
- Provisions pausing the identification of new SNAs are included in the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024.
- A review of the NPSIB has occurred. It focused on consideration of the criteria for identifying SNAs, the process of assessing and identifying SNAs, and the management of land subject to SNAs.
- Any further changes to the NPSIB will be progressed through phase three of the Government's resource management reform programme.

## **Jobs for Nature - Associate Minister for the Environment**

- The Jobs for Nature programme ends on 30 June 2025. Final reporting and closure activities will be completed by November 2025.
- A small number of projects will finish at later dates. Those projects will be supported and managed by their respective agencies.
- A final, independent evaluation report on the programme will be published by September 2025.
- An end of programme report will be published in November 2025. This report will summarise the programme across its five years from 2020, its impact, and learnings. It will draw on the independent evaluation, final quarterly reporting, project closure reports, a social impact assessment, and a final economic analysis using updated Treasury guidance.