Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Resource Management Act Reform Weekly Update

Whakanaketanga Whakarite Rawa Ahuarangi ā-Wiki

For the week ending 30 May 2025

Hon. Chris Bishop, Minister Responsible for Resource Management Act Reform

Key Updates

Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill

Resource Management (Infringement Offences) Regulations 1999
The Resource Management (Consenting and other System Changes) Amendment Bill (the Bill) proposes to increase the maximum fines for RMA offences that are prosecuted though the courts. For lower-level offences, councils impose infringement notice fees (like an instant fine). The value of these fees is set out in the Resource Management (Infringement Offences) Regulations (the Regulations) which have not been increased since they were introduced in 1999.

We commenced a review of the Regulations in 2022. Policy work is complete, and amended Regulations have been drafted. The next step is to take a Cabinet paper to the Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG) for authorisation to submit the amended Regulations to the Executive Council for approval and gazettal.

In BRF-4063 (September 2024), you decided that the Regulations Cabinet paper should proceed as part of the Phase 2 RMA reform work. We recommend that you include the Regulations in the Cabinet paper that you will take to LEG seeking approval to introduce a Government Amendment Paper for the Bill. We consider the increase in the infringement fees is complementary to the increase in the fines for RMA prosecutions delivered via the Bill, and therefore these two changes could be considered together at LEG.

Including the amendment to the Regulations in the Bill Cabinet paper will not have any impacts on timeframes for the Bill, which will be enacted in August 2025.

We recommend that you:

- Direct officials to include the amended Regulations in the Legislation Committee paper for the Bill

Y / N

You will receive further advice on amendments to the Bill
At your meeting with us on 27 May, you discussed Auckland Council's Plan Change 78 (PC78) City Centre decisions and its replacement plan change, as well as options to strengthen the Bill. You will receive further advice on 4 June about strengthening the requirement of the Auckland Housing Planning Instrument to better enable housing capacity, and advice on a new regulation making power to remove or modify plan rules that unduly limit development capacity or impact the cost of housing. 9(2)(f)(iv) We will provide you with an update on data and evidence underpinning PC78 and its replacement plan change on Friday 30 May.

You will also receive further advice on the proposal to stop plan and policy statement changes that have not yet proceeded to a hearing. This advice is due to your office on 5 June.

Business Group: Environmental Management and Adaptation
Owner: Pernelle Vari, 027 265 5915

Reporting provided to DPMC for the Government Quarterly Plan

On 26 May, the following update was provided to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to be included in the Government Quarterly Plan report:

Action item 11: Begin public consultation on National Direction to the Resource Management Act 1991 to unlock development in infrastructure, housing, and our primary industries.

Due date: 29 May 2025

Update: The Cabinet paper titled: "Resource Management Reform Phase 2 National Direction: Approval to Consult" and four discussion documents was approved by the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee on 7 May [ECO-25-MIN-0059] and approved by Cabinet on 12 May [CAB-25-MIN-0151]. Public consultation will begin on 29 May and end on 27 July.

Business Group: Environmental Management and Adaptation
Owner: Jo Gascoigne, 027 531 7202

Meeting with Angela Foster of Foster + Melville Architects

You requested that the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development meet with Angela Foster of Foster + Melville Architects Limited to discuss her concerns about the RMA, which she contacted your office about. We met on with Angela Foster on 9 May. She raised her views that:

- heritage protection rules can be overly restrictive,
- regulation should focus on externalities,
- a City Architect position in local authorities could improve planning decisions, and
- centralisation of planning teams could assist in ensuring quality planning decisions.

In response, we discussed how elements of the new system that will replace the RMA will address many of her concerns. Elements of the new system discussed were updated national policy direction, national standards and standardised plan provisions, and the narrowed approach to effects management in the proposed Planning Act.

We do not consider any further follow up is required.

Business Group: Environmental Management and Adaptation
Owner: Pernelle Vari, 027 265 5915

Estimates 2025/26

The Environment Estimates Hearing is scheduled for 19 June and will be attended by the Minister for the Environment and officials from both the Ministry for the Environment and the Environmental Protection Authority.

Pre-hearing Written Deliverables
The Minister for the Environment submitted responses to the Standard Estimates Questionnaire with the Finance and Expenditure Committee on 23 May for Vote Environment.

We have prepared responses to the Supplementary Estimates Questionnaire (the Supplementary Questions), and these are with our Chief Executive for final review. We will provide your office with draft answers to these questions on 5 June for review.

The Minister for the Environment will lodge the Supplementary Questions with the Environment Committee on 12 June (one week prior to the hearing).

Business Group: Office of the Chief Executive
Owner: Chelsea Cooper - Acting Manager Ministerial Services, 027 555 4367

Update to Ministers on the Ministry for the Environment's readiness to respond to a catastrophic event in Wellington

Readiness to Respond to a Catastrophic Event in Wellington
We have appropriate plans and structures in place to respond to a catastrophic event affecting Wellington, in line with Government good practice and the Prime Minister's expectations.

Business Continuity Planning:
We have completed a business impact analysis and developed continuity plans for all critical functions. A formal Resilience Programme is underway to strengthen response capability over the next 12 months.

Response Capability:
We maintain a Business Continuity and Response Team (BCaRT), supported by Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) training which is currently being rolled out.

Auckland-Based Leadership:
An Alternative Leadership Team (ALT), including a designated Chief Executive, is based in Auckland and prepared to assume operational control during and after an event. Key functions such as IT, payroll, and accounts payable can be maintained from outside Wellington.

Executive Continuity:
The Chief Executive and two Deputy Secretaries are based outside Wellington, providing strong executive leadership continuity in the event of local disruption.

Crown Entities and Emissions Trading Scheme:
We do not hold current business continuity information for the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) or the Climate Change Commission. The EPA, which manages the New Zealand Emissions Trading Register, has its own continuity plan specific to the Register, but further detail can be obtained if required.

Overall, we are well-positioned to maintain critical operations and leadership in response to a major event, with further capability-building efforts ongoing.

Business Group: Business Transformation and Services
Owner: Duncan Stuart, 027 426 6115

RMA Statutory Notifications to the Minister for the Environment

Type	From	Planning Instrument	Purpose	Date Received	Consultation Period or Statutory Timeframe	Response
Notification (Clause 5, Schedule 1)	Auckland Council	Plan Change 113 to the Auckland Unitary Plan	To make changes to the Notable Tree Schedule in recognition of new entries and amendments (174 individual trees and 29 groups of trees).	22 May 2025	22 May 2025 to 23 June 2025	Further advice can be prepared on request.
Notification (Clause 5, Schedule 1)	Auckland Council	Plan Change 114 (Private) to the Auckland Unitary Plan	To rezone a portion of 36A Eaglehurst Road from Business - Light Industry to Residential - Mixed Housing Suburban.	22 May 2025	22 May 2025 to 23 June 2025	Further advice can be prepared on request.
Notification (Clause 5, Schedule 1)	Auckland Council	Plan Change 115 (Private) to the Auckland Unitary Plan	To rezone 1.28ha of the site at 20 Noel Williams Place, Windsor Park, from Open Space – Sport and Active Recreation to Residential – Mixed Housing Urban (MHU) Zone.	22 May 2025	22 May 2025 to 23 June 2025	Further advice can be prepared on request.

This information is included in the RMA Reform Weekly Update, in addition to Hon Simmonds Environment Weekly Update, in recognition of the correlation between the Environment and RMA Reform portfolios.

Intensification Planning Instrument Progress

Process step	Council	IPI progress	Finish date (notify decisions on IHP recommendations)
Recommendations referred to Minister	Waikato District Council	Council referred two rejected IHP recommendations to you for a final decision on 31 October 2024. We provided you with advice on 3 April 2025 (BRF-5555 refers), and you made your decisions on 14 April 2025. You accepted one of the IHP recommendations and deferred your decision on the other. You wrote to the Council on 17 April 2025, informing them of your decisions.	22 October 2024 (completed on time)
	Christchurch City Council (NPS-UD Policy 3 and 4 parts of PC14)	Council made decisions on the balance of IHP recommendations required to give effect to Policies 3 and 4 of the NPS-UD on 2 December 2024, rejecting 20 recommendations. Council referred the rejected recommendations to you on 24 February 2025. We provided you with advice on 12 May 2025. You have agreed to recommendations and officials are working with your office to amend the decisions letter to the Council and prepare a press release.	20 December 2024 (completed on time)
In progress	Waimakariri District Council	Council must make decisions on IHP recommendations by 30 June 2025 and notify these decisions by 14 July 2025. The IHP has held all scheduled hearings and is now moving into the deliberations stage.	14 July 2025
	Christchurch City Council (MDRS parts of PC14)	Council has deferred decisions on those parts of its IPI not subject to Policies 3 and 4 of the NPS-UD (i.e., MDRS components). Council has requested a further extension to make decisions on the balance of its IPI, until 16 September 2026. We provided advice (BRF-6127 refers), and you have agreed to decline the request. You wrote to the Mayor of Christchurch on 9 May 2025, informing him of your decision.	12 December 2025
	Auckland Council (rest of PC78, non-Policy 3(a))	Hearing on 'Metropolitan Centre Outstanding Matters' scheduled for 3 June 2025.	31 March 2026
Completed	Kāpiti Coast District Council	Completed.	20 August 2023

Process step	Council	IPI progress	Finish date (notify decisions on IHP recommendations)
	Selwyn District Council	Completed.	20 August 2023
	Hutt City Council	Completed.	22 September 2023
	Porirua City Council	Completed.	14 December 2023
	Upper Hutt City Council	Completed.	20 December 2023
	Western Bay of Plenty District Council	Completed.	1 March 2024
	Wellington City Council	Completed.	20 March 2024
	Rotorua District Council	Completed.	31 March 2024
	Tauranga City Council	Completed (substantive IPI).	17 July 2024
	Waipā District Council	Nearly completed; Council to publicly notify your decisions on referred recommendations and make their IPI fully operative. Council staff have indicated this will be done on 1 July 2025.	30 August 2024
	Christchurch City Council	Partially completed (NPS-UD Policy 3 and 4 components, except for referred recommendations).	18 September 2024
	Tauranga City Council (Tauriko West)	Completed (Variation 1).	31 December 2025
	Hamilton City Council	Completed.	20 December 2024
	Auckland Council (Policy 3(a) parts of PC78)	Nearly completed; Council made decisions on IHP recommendations on 22 May, accepting all recommendations. Council to publicly notify its decisions on the city centre provisions, which will then be operative.	30 May 2025

Upcoming Briefings for Minister Bishop

Papers due to the Minister in the following 3 weeks
As at 1pm, 28 May 2025

Tracking Number	Title	Purpose	Responsible General Manager / Chief Advisor	Title Suitable for Proactive Release?	Date due to Minister
BRF-6258	Event Note/Talking Points: Meeting with Pou Taiao leaders, 27 May 2025	Provides background information and talking points in advance of meeting with Pou Taiao leaders, 27 May 2025	Gina Rangi	Y/N	Sent 26 May
BRF-6280	Mōkai Pātea: Natural resource management arrangements for Rangitīkei River	Seeks agreement to seek Cabinet agreement to negotiation parameters for natural resource arrangements over the Rangitīkei River catchment.	Gina Rangi	Y/N	Sent 26 May
BRF-6285	Ministerial consultation - interim Statements of core Purpose for merged Crown Research Institutes	Summarises departmental feedback given on the interim Statements of Core Purpose for merged Crown Research Institutes and makes recommendations for consideration in providing feedback during Ministerial consultation.	Clare Barton	Y/N	Sent 27 May
BRF-6274	Advice on progressing the regulation of Carbon Capture Use and Storage	Seeks agreement on whether regulation of CCUS will proceed via bespoke legislation or through phase 3 of RM reform and policy decision required for drafting.	Jo Gascoigne	Y/N	2 June
BRF-6188	Resource management reform - Compliance and enforcement	Seeks decisions on compliance and enforcement.	Martyn Pinckard	Y/N	3 June
BRF-6217	Resource management reform - Central Government's role in spatial plan decision making	Seeks decisions on central Government's role in spatial plan decision making.	**Martyn Pinckard**	Y/N	3 June
BRF-6268	9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]	[redacted]	Hayden Johnston	Y/N	3 June

BRF-6283	Further advice on increasing development capacity in Auckland and options for RM Bill 2	Provides advice on options to increase development capacity in Auckland, including options for amendments to RM Bill 2.	Jessica Ranger	Y/N	4 June
BRF-6200	9(2)(f)(iv)	9(2)(f)(iv)	Hemi Smiler	Y/N	5 June
BRF-6142	Resource management reform - Planning Tribunal	Seeks decisions on the establishment of a Planning Tribunal, including purpose and Functions.	Martyn Pinckard	Y/N	5 June
BRF-6117	Resource management reform - Systems funding and cost recovery	9(2)(f)(iv)	Martyn Pinckard	Y/N	5 June
BRF-6284	Decisions to stop plan change processes and finalise exemption criteria	Seeks decisions to draft an amendment paper to Bill 2 that progresses decisions in BRF-6220 to stop plan changes before the hearings stage.	Rhedyn Law	Y/N	5 June
BRF-6226	Resource management reform - Plan-making, consenting and designations	Seeks decisions on number of planning elements, including designations, plan-making, consents and standardised zones.	Martyn Pinckard	Y/N	10 June
BRF-6109	Resource management reform - Heritage in the system	9(2)(f)(iv)	Jo Gascoigne	Y/N	12 June
BRF-6045	Resource management reform - Regulatory takings and justification reports	Seeks decisions on regulatory takings and justification reports.	Rhedyn Law	Y/N	12 June
BRF-6038	Resource management reform - Allocation and freshwater rights and interests	Seeks decisions on the approach to allocation of natural resources, and freshwater rights and interests.	Hayden Johnston	Y/N	12 June

BRF-6151	Resource management reform - Coastal marine area	Seeks decisions on aspects relating to the coastal marine areas.	Hayden Johnston	Y/N	19 June
BRF-6246	9(2)(f)(iv)	9(2)(f)(iv)	Martyn Pinckard	Y/N	19 June

Cabinet Papers

As at 1pm, 28 May 2025

Tracking Number	Title	Description	Committee	Responsible General Manager	Date due to Minister's Office	Lodgement Date	Date of Committee Meeting	Date of Cabinet Meeting
CAB-562	Further Policy Decisions for Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill	Seeks agreement to make changes to the Bill via an Amendment Paper.	ECO	Jess Ranger	21 May	29 May	4 June	9 June
CAB-535	Te Awa Tupua | Whanganui River - Te Pou Tupua: APH documentation to confirm joint appointments	Provides documents for reappointments to the Office of Te Pou Tupua.	APH	Martin Workman	19 February	TBC	TBC	TBC

Draft Cabinet Papers with the Ministry for Agency Consultation

Below is a list of draft Cabinet papers being prepared by other agencies, which we are being consulted on due to the subject matter's connection with the RM Reform portfolio as at 1pm, 28 May 2025

Date consultation request received	Draft title of paper	Subject of paper	Our comments	Responsible General Manager	Intended date to Cabinet Committee
21 May 2025	Unlocking economic growth through efficient use of Crown land	Seeks agreement to a targeted review of the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 and the Land Act 1948 to increase economic growth and reduce the cost of administering Crown Land.	• We noted overlap with Resource Management regimes and suggested that this should be done in consultation with the Minister Responsible for Resource Management Reform. • We also noted the need to consider ecological values.	Hayden Johnston	4 June 2025

Official Information Act Requests for Minister Bishop

As at 1pm, 28 May 2025

Tracking Number	MO Tracking Number	Request	Correspondent	Organisation	Date due to Minister's Office	Date due to Requestor
OIAM-801	OIA25-CB109	Regulatory takings RMA reform	Genevieve Toop	Greenpeace	10 June	17 June

Ministerial Correspondence Update

As at 1pm, 28 May 2025

We are preparing responses to 25 pieces of correspondence on a wide range of topics including requests to opt out of identified Significant Natural Areas, concerns about a solar farm in Upper Hutt, sand mining in Bream Bay, concerns with housing growth and residential standards, requests for updates on Christchurch City Council's Plan Change 14, concerns around the costs of resource consenting, issues with granny flat policy and consenting, requests to uphold Treaty settlements and Te Tiriti obligations, and potential for the Fast-track process to enable large-scale grocery retail entry.

Written Parliamentary Questions Update

As at 1pm, 28 May 2025

We are preparing responses to written parliamentary questions on a range of topics including the number of successful Budget bids, portfolio savings achieved, 'fiscal cliffs', a list of Budget advice received and other queries as part of Budget 2025, the number of permanent staff employed, roles created, consultations and restructures by the Minister's agencies, and for advice received and papers taken to Cabinet in May.