



National planning standards

This is part of a series of fact sheets prepared for the Environment Committee's 2019/20 Estimates examination of Vote Environment.

The first set of national planning standards came into force on 3 May 2019

The standards provide standards for the basic elements of plans and policy statements made under the Resource Management Act 1991. The Ministry is currently supporting the implementation of the national planning standards.

The first set of national planning standards

- The national planning standards were gazetted on 5 April 2019 and came into force on 3 May 2019. The project is now in its implementation phase.
- The standards provide national consistency regarding structure, form, definitions, and electronic accessibility. This makes plans and policy statements easier to prepare and use.
- The Ministry needs to provide support to implement the planning standards in an effective and timely way. Subject to funding, the Ministry will provide guidance material, share best practice, engage with councils, and provide training courses.
- The Ministry's support for councils is targeted to those currently implementing the standards. In the future, it intends to target those councils with less capability and capacity (ie, rural and provincial councils).
- The Ministry is already working with councils who are developing their plans in the structure and form of the planning standards. We expect that some plans will be compliant with the planning standards in the coming months.

Background information about the first set of planning standards

What the first set of national planning standards cover

There are 17 standards in the first set of standards. They provide a structure and form for policy statements and plans, definitions, and requirements for electronic functionality and accessibility. They also include a set of zones for councils to choose from, spatial layers, mapping, and noise standards.

The new standards do not determine local policy matters or the substantive content of plans, which remain the responsibility of local councils and their communities, guided by other national direction instruments.

Implementation costs and timeframes

The implementation of the planning standards is expected to cost approximately \$40.8 million over the next 10 years. However, the cost of updating plans to meet the standards will be exceeded by the cost savings to those who use them. Cost-benefit analysis modelling by Castalia Strategic Advisors concluded that the proposed first set of planning standards alone will have a net benefit of \$21.6 million.

Most councils will be able to implement the majority of the standards as part of their next plan review. Different implementation challenges have been acknowledged by adjusting implementation timeframes, which are as follows:

- regional councils have three years to make amendments to their regional policy statements and ten years for their regional plans. Unitary authorities also have ten years to adopt the planning standards
- district and city councils generally have five years to make amendments to their district plans, and have seven years for the definitions standard. A smaller group who have recently completed or are about to complete a plan review have seven years to make amendments, and have nine years for the definitions standard.

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