

**In Confidence**

Office of the Associate Minister for the Environment  
Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee

**Government response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report**

**Proposal**

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to a proposed Government response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report<sup>1</sup> and outlines next steps to drive action in line with the response. It also provides an update on projects underway to address key issues with our resource recovery and recycling system.

**Relation to government priorities**

- 2 Taking action on plastic waste is a key step in New Zealand's journey towards building a low waste economy, with an effective resource recovery and recycling system. This contributes to the Government's objective to transition to a clean, green, and carbon neutral New Zealand.

**Executive Summary**

*Response to the Rethinking Plastics Report*

- 3 In December 2019, the Prime Minister and I welcomed the *Rethinking Plastics* report produced by the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor. The report laid out an aspirational vision of Aotearoa in 2030 whereby New Zealanders are world leaders at reducing and dealing with plastic waste. To make progress towards this vision, the *Rethinking Plastics* report made 51 specific recommendations, including a recommendation to develop a national plastics action plan.
- 4 Following assessment of the recommendations for effectiveness, feasibility and alignment with Government priorities, officials have developed a proposed Government response to the recommendations<sup>2</sup>, included at Appendix One. The proposed response agrees, or agrees to investigate, the majority of the recommendations set out in the report.

<sup>1</sup> *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand*, A report from the panel convened by the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia, December 2019

<sup>2</sup> Noting that the report envisaged action by other parties too, including local government, the waste sector, business, the science sector, NGOs and communities

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- 5 Many of the recommended actions related to regulatory reform, improvements to our recycling systems and investment in infrastructure are underway or planned, and others (relating to Government Procurement, sharing citizen science outcomes and teacher resources) can be progressed using existing mechanisms.
- 6 A further group of recommendations require scoping, funding and further consideration but for the most part, the intention behind the recommendations is agreed. To respond to this group of recommendations, I am proposing that the Government takes action to:
  - 6.1 lead the development of a national plastics action plan
  - 6.2 investigate how it can improve the depth and accessibility of data on plastics, fill knowledge gaps and encourage innovation
  - 6.3 consider how to support behaviour change through education, engagement with sectors, support for innovative business, development of standards and guidelines and by considering positive incentives for change
  - 6.4 better co-ordinate and leverage international connections, fora and mechanisms to support our plastics agenda.
- 7 The only recommendation not agreed at this stage is the proposal to set up a specific Government fund for plastics innovation (recommendation 5(a)). This is because science, research and innovation funding opportunities exist already via major funding channels. At this stage, I recommend that effort should be directed towards identifying key priorities for plastics innovation and supporting better co-ordination with and across funding agencies to encourage high impact plastics research and innovation.
- 8 Subject to Cabinet decisions, I intend to drive action in line with the Government response by establishing a cross-agency plastics work programme encompassing current and proposed action across seven workstreams. Further detail is set out in Appendix One. The graphic at Appendix Two<sup>3</sup> shows the proposed work programme as a draft action plan, with indicative timing. It is intended that the plan included at Appendix Two will form the basis for a national plastics action plan as recommended by the report.
- 9 Subject to Cabinet approval, and with oversight of a senior officials group, the Government response and draft action plan will be tested with iwi/Māori, local government, the waste sector, businesses, non-governmental organisations, the science community and community groups. A report back will be provided to Cabinet in December 2020, including proposals for a finalised national plastics action plan and confirmed Government work programme.

*Projects to improve our recycling and resource recovery system*

<sup>3</sup> Note that the numbered project streams shown in the timeline in Appendix Two refer back to the response numbers set out at Appendix One

- 10 Since the release of the *Rethinking Plastics* report, officials have been working in tandem with stakeholders on priority actions to address issues with our recycling and recovery system across all waste streams. This includes improving the performance and consistency of our kerbside recycling collection system, working towards a recycling labelling scheme, and the co-design of a beverage container return scheme. Updates on progress for these initiatives are set out at Appendix Three.

*Next steps*

- 11 Subject to Cabinet decisions, I intend to deliver announcements setting out the Government response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report and progress on priority projects in mid-August 2020. Details will be confirmed with the Prime Minister's Office.

**Background**

- 12 In December 2019, the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor released the *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa* report. The report recommended a broad range of actions to tackle New Zealand's plastic waste problem. As noted by the Environment, Energy and Climate Committee prior to release of the report<sup>4</sup>, the Government's preliminary response was to announce<sup>5</sup> that it would develop a full Government response and make progress on priority projects<sup>6</sup>. This paper seeks agreement to a proposed Government response, recommends next steps, and provides updates on the priority projects.

**Rethinking Plastics - Aspiration for Change and Recommended Approach**

- 13 As set out in detail in the *Rethinking Plastics* report, plastic has many desirable properties that make it easy and affordable to transport and suitable for a range of applications. However, there is increasing public concern over the harmful effects of plastic pollution on our environment and health. Only a small proportion of New Zealand's plastic waste is recycled. We currently have limited onshore plastic reprocessing capability and due to restrictions put in place by China and other countries offshore markets for recycling low-value mixed plastics and other hard-to-recycle waste are severely limited, if they can be found at all.
- 14 Plastic pollution affects our recreational, cultural and spiritual values as New Zealanders. The build-up of plastic waste in our ecosystem impacts the mauri (life force) of our environment, interferes with our clean green image, and has growing economic impacts. Taking action on plastic waste will contribute to the Government's objective to transition to a clean, green, and carbon neutral New Zealand.

<sup>4</sup> This was an oral item, tabled by Minister Sage to the Committee on 5 December 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Press release: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/govt-pledges-next-steps-plastic-waste>

<sup>6</sup> The projects were setting goals to phase out of hard-to-recycle plastics, supporting solutions to the soft plastics problem and accelerating work with local government and industry on better and more consistent kerbside collection of recyclables.

- 15 This action will also demonstrate that New Zealand is doing its part to combat a global problem that has spurred the development of a range of international commitments, initiatives and partnerships, including ones that New Zealand has joined such as the Sustainable Development Goal target on reducing marine pollution from land based activities, the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, UN Environment Assembly resolutions and the UN's Clean Seas Campaign.
- 16 The *Rethinking Plastics* report lays out an aspirational vision for Aotearoa in 2030. In it, New Zealanders are innovative world leaders in reducing plastic use and in limiting the amount of plastic found in our environment. In this future state, there may still be some plastic waste but a move to restrict use to recyclable plastics, with clearly labelled packaging, amongst other initiatives, will restrict the volume of plastic waste generated.
- 17 In terms of overall approach, the report recommends that to make progress, we need to change our relationship with plastics, treating it as a valuable resource that is reused and repaired as part of a circular economy, rather than a resource that is cheap and disposable.
- 18 The report also recommends that when prioritising action, it is important to reduce the generation of plastic waste at source, rather than focussing all of our attention towards improving our recycling and recovery systems. Taking this approach will involve reimagining plastics, and will require innovation, creation of new materials and new ways of using them.
- 19 The report states that there is no silver bullet to address plastic waste, but rather, that action is required by Government, local government, sectors, businesses and communities working together. The report identifies that the current lack of a national strategy and action plan specifically related to plastics makes it difficult for these groups to know where to invest effort in rethinking plastics.
- 20 Accordingly, one of the key recommendations of the report is the development of a national plastics action plan. To inform the contents of the plan, the report makes 51 specific recommendations, grouped into six themes to enable delivery against five success indicators, as set out at Figure One<sup>7</sup> below.

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<sup>7</sup> The graphic at Figure One was included in the *Rethinking Plastics* report, to show at a high level, what action should be taken (on the left hand side), to achieve the goals set out on the right hand side.

1 Figure One

2



**Proposed Government Response**

21 When the report was released in December 2019, the Government welcomed the report and indicated that a full Government response would be provided by mid- 2020. To develop the proposed response, officials at the Ministry for the Environment<sup>8</sup> have assessed and prioritised the recommendations according to feasibility<sup>9</sup>, effectiveness and alignment with Government priorities. In consultation with central government agencies, the recommendations were assessed against existing work programmes to identify potential synergies and areas where additional action is required.

22 Overall, officials consider that the panel convened by the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor has produced a thorough and comprehensive report, which will provide a solid base to tackle the problem of plastic waste in years to come. Details of the proposed Government response to the recommendations are set out at Appendix One. In summary, we are recommending that we agree, or agree to investigate the majority.

23 Many of the recommended actions to develop an enabling regulatory framework and support better infrastructure are either underway or planned, including:

23.1 the expansion of the waste disposal levy, approved by Cabinet on 4 June 2020 [ENV-20-MIN-0018 refers]. This will incentivise reduced waste to landfill and enable investment in a number of key priority areas across all waste streams, including recycling and reprocessing

<sup>8</sup> Supported by Wellington consultants, Martin Jenkins

<sup>9</sup> Including whether feasibility is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated response

- infrastructure for plastics, and support for research, development and innovation.
- 23.2 proposed regulation to eliminate unrecyclable and certain single-use plastic items - Moving Away From *Hard-to-Recycle Plastics and Single Use Plastic Items* – Approval to Consult [ENV-20-MIN-0027 refers].
- 23.3 development of regulated product stewardship schemes (including for plastic packaging), approved by Cabinet on 28 June 2020 [ENV-20-MIN-0024 refers].
- 23.4 work with industry and local government on standardisation of kerbside recycling collection and a national approach to a recycling label, as detailed at Appendix Three.
- 23.5 work to co-design a container return scheme to recover high-value plastics and other beverage container materials for recycling and further re-use, as detailed at Appendix Three.
- 23.6 regulation to implement a change to the *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal*, to better control the trade of mixed, low value plastic waste [ENV-20-MIN-0029 refers].
- 23.7 investment of up to \$124 million to support better recycling infrastructure, much of it to recover and recycle plastics onshore for re-purposing into new products, allocated from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF).
- 24 A further tranche of recommendations can be progressed using existing government processes and mechanisms. For example, subject to further scoping and funding, development of teacher resources and sharing of citizen science results (recommendations (5b) and (3d) of the *Rethinking Plastics* report) may be supported via the existing *Curious Minds* programme, operated by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).
- 25 In addition, in response to recommendations about procurement (recommendation 3(a) and 3(f)), Rule 20 of the Government Procurement Rules, provides a framework whereby guidance can be developed to set expectations for relevant agencies<sup>10</sup> in relation to the procurement of low waste goods and services.
- 26 To address the balance of the recommendations, and subject to further consideration and funding, , I propose the following additions to the Government's work programme:
- 26.1 *Co-ordinate and lead* - Development a system-wide national plastics action plan.

<sup>10</sup> This includes all Government Departments, the New Zealand Police, the Defence Force and most Crown Entities.

- 26.2 *Improve data on plastics* - Review currently available data on plastics, identify data sources and gaps, and subject to feasibility and funding, progress the development of resources capturing accessible data on plastics<sup>11</sup>. In addition, explore the development of plastics indicators to incorporate into key national frameworks.
- 26.3 *Identify research and innovation priorities* - Identify and disseminate information gaps and priorities for research and innovation to encourage high impact plastics research. In line with priorities identified and subject to funding, support citizen science, research, and business/research collaboration.
- 26.4 *Behaviour change* - Consider policy approaches that provide positive incentives for change to complement the regulatory regime in place<sup>12</sup>, support education initiatives and develop standards and guidelines.
- 26.5 *Sector engagement* - Engage with sectors to assess information gaps and supports needed to encourage change on a sector by sector basis.
- 26.6 *International* – Identify, prioritise and engage with bilateral, regional or multilateral forums, organisations and mechanisms which support the proposed national plastics action plan.
- 27 As set out in more detail in the financial implications section, Government agency costs to take forward the work streams set out above can, at the initial stages, be met from baseline funding. Some initiatives, such as developing an accessible data platform, may require significant funding and may be the subject of future budget proposals.
- 28 The only recommendation not agreed at this stage<sup>13</sup> is the proposal to set-up a specific fund for plastics innovation (recommendation 5(a)). We note that science, research and innovation funding opportunities exist for plastics already via major funding channels. These include the Strategic Science Investment Fund, the Endeavour Fund, Research and Development Project Grants, the Research and Development tax incentive, the Waste Minimisation Fund, the New Zealand Product Accelerator and the Bioresource Processing Alliance. Identification of research and innovation priorities, as set out above, is likely to encourage more public good plastics research and innovation.

#### Proposed Plastics Work Programme and Action Plan

- 29 Subject to approval of the proposed response set out at Appendix One, I propose to co-ordinate action across Government by establishing a cross agency plastics work programme, guided by a senior officials group, with representation from the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), MBIE, the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) and

<sup>11</sup> Note that this will be aligned with existing, broader projects to capture data across all waste streams.

<sup>12</sup> Note that this was not a specific recommendation in the report, but is consistent with statements made in the body of the report.

<sup>13</sup> Noting that following further consideration and investigation on feasibility and costs, other recommendations may ultimately not be progressed.

Statistics New Zealand<sup>14</sup>. The work programme will drive action across seven separate workstreams and will encompass current and new projects as set out in above and in Appendix One.

- 30 Set out at Appendix Two is a graphic showing the proposed Government work programme as a draft action plan<sup>15</sup>, showing objectives and indicative timing. It is intended that the draft action plan will form the basis for a national plastics action plan as recommended by the report.
- 31 I propose that the draft action plan be tested with iwi/Māori, local government, the waste sector, and business and community groups, to inform the development of a system wide national plastics action plan. Ministry for the Environment officials have sought preliminary advice from Te Arawhiti about engagement with iwi/Māori, and are in the process of developing an engagement plan.
- 32 Following engagement as above, a report back will be provided to Cabinet by December 2020, with proposals for a finalised national plastics action plan, a supporting Government work programme and appropriate governance arrangements to guide action.
- 33 It is important to note that the plastics work programme and associated action plan will not operate in isolation from other work across the waste and resource efficiency work programme. Because many of the actions already underway operate across all waste streams, the plastics work programme will be integrated into a wider waste and resource efficiency work programme and incorporated into the new Waste Strategy, which is being developed as part of the implementation of the expanded waste levy [ENV-20-MIN-0018 refers].

#### Priority Projects to improve our recycling system

- 34 As indicated at the launch of the *Rethinking Plastics* report in December 2019, one of our key focus areas has been to drive a recycling and resource recovery system that works and that enables New Zealand households and consumers to reduce, reuse and recycle. Because consumer facing plastics sit within a complex system, driving change requires reform across the broader waste system. Key challenges are:
- 34.1 kerbside recycling systems are not consistent across the country, creating confusion for consumers, and low levels of recovery of recyclable materials.
  - 34.2 on - product recycling labelling is either not present or inconsistent, contributing to poor recycling practices which in turn impacts resource recovery and recycling rates.
  - 34.3 very high volumes of beverage containers (an estimated 944 million) end up in landfill or littered every year, preventing recovery of high-value plastics for recycling and further re-use.

<sup>14</sup> Additional agencies may be included as appropriate as we develop the work programme

<sup>15</sup> Note that the numbers on the timeline refer back to the response numbers in Appendix One

- 35 Responding to these challenges are key first steps to progress the vision set out by the *Rethinking Plastics* Report. Work is underway to investigate a more standardised kerbside recycling system, looking at options for a national recycling label, and designing a container return scheme. Updates on progress for these projects is set out at Appendix Three.

### Next steps

- 36 Subject to Cabinet decisions on the recommendations set out in this paper, I propose to deliver announcements encompassing the Government's response to the *Rethinking Plastics* Report and updates on the projects set out at Appendix Three as appropriate. My office will confirm final details with the Prime Minister's Office.

### Financial Implications

#### *Costs to Government*

- 37 Funding to support the plastic work programme was reflected in the Vote Environment 2020/21 budget. This included departmental funding of \$18.02 million over four years (beginning 2020/21) to fund:
- 37.1 waste levy expansion implementation [ENV-20-MIN-0018 refers]
  - 37.2 establishment of cross-agency governance to consider recommendations from the *Rethinking Plastics* report and advance key recommendations.
- 38 This funding will support initial costs to finalise the national plastics action plan and investigate additional actions as set out at paragraph 26. Resource implications in relation to work undertaken by other agencies are expected to be covered within existing departmental votes.
- 39 As revenue from the expanded waste levy comes on stream, [ENV-20-MIN-0018 refers], there is potential for initiatives to be funded in line with the overall waste work programme. If warranted, specific projects under the final national plastics action plan may also be the subject to future budget proposals.
- 40 In relation to recent support for reprocessing and recycling infrastructure, Vote Environment was appropriated up to \$124 million to support better recycling infrastructure, much of it to recover and recycle plastics onshore for re-purposing into new products, allocated from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF).

#### *Cumulative Impacts*

- 41 I am mindful that given the breadth of the waste initiatives underway, there will be a need to ensure that their cumulative impacts do not overly burden a particular sector or group and that the timing for these initiatives is well communicated, co-ordinated and phased.
- 42 When considering the impacts of the expanded waste levy, regulatory product stewardship, proposed regulatory phase outs, and a potential container return scheme, I note that;
- 42.1 expected implementation of the initiatives will not commence until July 2021 (class one of the waste levy implementation), and will be phased in between 2021 and 2025 (and for some sectors, after this, dependent on decisions and industry readiness).
- 42.2 as individual initiatives are approved and implemented, they will be subject to their own cost benefits analyses, to monitor expected impact on sectors.
- 42.3 the increased waste levy revenue will be available to support councils, communities and businesses to make changes in response.
- 43 In addition, consideration of these impacts needs to be balanced against expected environmental, economic, and social benefits. These include measurable benefits such as decreased waste volumes, litter reduction, improved recovery and recycling rates, climate emission reductions and lower costs on the Government, councils and communities to mitigate environmental impacts.
- 44 As the Ministry for the Environment develops the Waste Strategy and finalises the national plastics action plan, it will consider cumulative impacts for particular sectors, and will consider how best to provide support. For example, I expect that the food and beverage and packaging sectors may need some targeted support as initiatives progress, such as best practice guidance, education, and infrastructure investment.

#### **Legislative Implications**

- 45 Some individual recommendations made in the *Rethinking Plastics* report have legislative implications if the Government agrees to them. Ministers will seek approval from Cabinet at a later date, when more specific policy proposals are being advanced as part of the Government's plastics work programme.

#### **Climate Implications of Policy Assessment**

- 46 The Ministry for the Environment Climate Implications of Policy Assessment (CIPA) team has been consulted and confirms that the CIPA requirements do not apply to this proposal as there is no direct emissions impact. Some of the recommendations made in the *Rethinking Plastics* report, if implemented, are likely to have emissions implications, particularly those that relate to issues in

the wider waste sector. The emissions implications of specific proposals will be assessed in more detail as they are advanced.

**Population Implications**

47 I have assessed population impacts as set out below.

Population group	How the proposal may affect this group
Māori	The Rethinking Plastics report makes a number of recommendations directed at ensuring that te ao Māori frameworks and perspectives are considered when taking action on plastics. This includes taking kaupapa Māori approaches to citizen science projects and drawing on mātauranga Māori when carrying out research and developing teaching resources. Advice received from Te Puni Kōkiri indicates that it will be important to engage early and work closely with whānau, hapū, and iwi at the local level when designing specific projects under the action plan, to reflect regional perspectives. Officials will take this into account as specific projects under the action plan are developed.
Disabled people	As part of the broader plastics work programme, action to phase out certain types of plastics (for example, single use plastic straws) may impact disabled people and the care sector <sup>16</sup> . The consultation process will allow officials to assess impact and if required, exemptions to phase outs may be appropriate. Implications will be assessed in more detail as specific proposals are advanced.

**Human Rights**

48 The proposals in this paper are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

**Consultation**

49 MFAT, MBIE, MPI and Statistics NZ have been consulted in the preparation of the Government Response set out at Appendix One and have confirmed they are able to take the actions set out in the response.

50 MFAT, MBIE, MPI, StatNZ, the Treasury, the Department of Conservation, the Office for Disability Issues and Te Puni Kōkiri have been consulted on the contents of this Cabinet paper, and their comments have been incorporated.

51 s 9(2)(h) 

52 The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Department of Internal Affairs, the Environmental Protection Authority and Callaghan Innovation have been

<sup>16</sup> See the separate Cabinet paper – *Moving Away From Hard-to-Recycle Plastics and Single Use Plastic Items – Approval to Consult* for details of phase out proposals and how such implications will be managed

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provided with an opportunity to provide feedback on the paper. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.

- 53 The Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor has been consulted on this paper and has indicated that it is comfortable with its contents. The Office suggested some minor changes to the Cabinet paper, which have been incorporated.

**Communications**

- 54 Subject to Cabinet decisions, the response set out at Appendix One (edited to be suitable for public release) will be released on the Ministry for the Environment's website, accompanied with material setting out context and the Government's work programme to address plastic waste. I recommend that I be delegated the authority to approve minor adjustments to the response, as it is prepared for public release.
- 55 The Ministry for the Environment may carry out targeted stakeholder engagement on the draft national plastics action plan in the pre-election period. Broader public engagement will be undertaken after the General Election.
- 56 I will make announcements setting out the Government response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report, work underway and planned.

**Proactive Release**

- 57 Subject to appropriate redactions, I propose to proactively release this Cabinet paper within two weeks of the announcements about the response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report being made. Redactions to protect sensitive information (relating to the recycling labelling scheme in particular) will be considered at this time.

**Recommendations**

The Associate Minister for the Environment recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **Note** the recommendations set out in *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand*, a report from the panel convened by the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor.
- 2 **Agree** to the proposed response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report as set out at Appendix One of this Cabinet paper.
- 3 **Authorise** the Associate Minister for the Environment (Hon Eugenie Sage) to:
  - 3.1 publicly release the Government Response document included at Appendix One; and
  - 3.2 approve any minor adjustments required to ensure that the Government Response is suitable for public release.

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- 4 **Agree** that a cross-agency plastics work programme be established to drive action in line with the Government response, guided by a senior officials group representing the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Statistics New Zealand.
- 5 **Note** that the Ministry for the Environment will carry out engagement with Treaty Partners and key stakeholders to develop a finalised national plastics action plan, based on the indicative draft set out at Appendix Two. In the pre-election period, this will be targeted engagement, with broader engagement carried out post-election, from October 2020.
- 6 **Invite** the Associate Minister for the Environment to report back to Cabinet in December 2020, with proposals for a finalised national plastics action plan, a confirmed Government work programme and appropriate governance arrangements.
- 7 **Note** the updates provided on the kerbside standardisation, recycling labelling and Container Return Scheme co-design project projects.
- 8 **Note** that subject to Cabinet decisions, and in consultation with the Prime Minister's Office, the Associate Minister for the Environment will make announcements about the Government response to the *Rethinking Plastics* report, together with other announcements as appropriate about progress on key projects.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Eugenie Sage

Associate Minister for the Environment

## Appendix One – Draft Government response to the recommendations in the *Rethinking Plastics* report

The recommendations in *Rethinking Plastics* are presented in six groups. We have regrouped them in seven groups to align better with the proposed Government work programme for plastics.

### 1. Government action

#	Recommendation	High-level response	
1a	Implement a national plastics action plan, building on actions outlined in this report (including recommendations 2-6) that outlines a clear vision and timeline of actions and signals expectations for the transition to a circular economy for plastics	<p>Agree</p> <p>A draft action plan has been developed setting out central government's proposed response to <i>Rethinking Plastics</i> (aligned with this response). Engagement with iwi/Māori and other actors in the system (e.g. local government, business and industry, NGOs, research institutions, etc) is needed to test and confirm a final action plan. A senior officials group will be set up to guide action in this phase. Following engagement and subject to Cabinet approval, the final action plan will then be taken forward by a governance group. This work will be co-ordinated with work being undertaken to implement the Waste Levy and revise the Waste Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• New work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Confirmation of final action plan by December 2020</li> </ul>	Response 1
3a	<p>Drive uptake of best-practice sustainable plastic use (e.g. reuse) through operational and funding levers:</p> <p>i) Adapt daily operations for government agencies and state owned enterprises</p> <p>ii) Make best practice a requirement of funding or approval (e.g. government-funded conferences)</p>	<p>Agree with the intent of this family of recommendations.</p> <p>Government agencies bound<sup>17</sup> by the Government Procurement Rules are required to support the procurement of low-waste goods, services and works, and encourage innovation to significantly reduce waste impacts from goods and services (Rule 20). The pursuit of plastic reduction in all contracts is encouraged by the Rules. This means that for all contracts, all agencies should (inter alia) support the procurement of low-waste goods, services and works and encourage innovation to significantly reduce waste impacts. For designated contracts<sup>18</sup>, agencies <b>must</b> support low waste procurement as above. Agencies must have regard to guidance published by MBIE on the procurement of low waste goods and services.</p>	Response 2
3f	Change government procurement to reflect sustainable use of plastic in all agencies and state-owned enterprises <sup>19</sup>	New Zealand Government Procurement is currently designing a strategy for the new generation of an All-of-Government Office Supplies solution, supporting agencies to purchase items that produce low amounts of	

<sup>17</sup> This includes all Government Departments, the New Zealand Police, the Defence Force and most Crown Entities

<sup>18</sup> As at July 2020. Office Supplies is a designated contract for the purposes of Rule 20

<sup>19</sup> We have interpreted recommendation 3f to mean that opportunities to use government procurement to support sustainable use of plastics by agencies will be identified.

3k Promote government-wide adoption of circular economy

waste and/or are recyclable. New Zealand Government Procurement, with support from MfE, will develop guidelines relating to the sustainable use of plastic in specific areas of government procurement, based on an assessment of volumes and risk. Objectives will seek to encourage a shift to reduce use of plastic, and shift away from use of unrecyclable plastics and single use items. New Zealand Government Procurement will consider how plastic and other types of waste can be reduced in government building and construction procurements.

In relation to 3a(i), (daily operations) and 3a (ii), (conditions of funding), MfE will undertake additional scoping work to consider the feasibility of implementing these recommendations.

- High priority
- New work
- Lead agency: MBIE, with MfE support.
- New Zealand Government Procurement to continue designing a strategy for all-of-government procurement of office supplies, as a designated contract under Rule 20 of the Government Procurement Rules.
- The areas for development of guidelines relating to the sustainable use of plastic (including those relating to building and construction procurements) will be identified by June 2021
- Scoping by MfE in relation to 3(a)(i) (daily operations) and 3(a) ii, (conditions of funding) to be undertaken by June 2021

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of the Official Information Act 1982

## 2. Data and information

This set of recommendations relates to collecting data, reporting on data collected, and presenting the data for actionable insights.

#	Recommendation	High-level response
2a	Commission projects to audit and quantify known data gaps for plastics, including use, collection, reuse, recycling, disposal and leakage in NZ to fill.	Agree that New Zealand's data collection on plastics (and waste more generally) needs improvement. Work to improve data is underway as part of the implementation of the expanded Waste Levy, covering all waste streams. In addition, the Waste Minimisation Fund supports a number of litter projects. Under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015, the Government Statistician and the Secretary for the Environment have responsibility for environmental reporting.
2d	Mandate ongoing data collection at product level and establish an open data framework with a centralised database that includes measures for material type, weight, colour, recycled content, contamination, reuse, industry, source and end market (local or overseas), location, and average product lifetime of all plastic used in NZ	In response to recommendation 2a, MfE (with Statistics NZ support) will work to identify and quantify data gaps about current activity, and will then consider fulfilling data needs as new activity is undertaken. Additional recommendations (2d and 2e) will then be considered, and will be subject to feasibility and funding. This work will be co-ordinated with work streams complete and underway including: the response to the Parliamentary Commissioner or the Environment's report, Focusing Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental reporting system the work to capture a long-term view of the information the government needs in the Data Investment Plan the Environmental Domain Plan the Environmental Reporting Plan.
2e	Review data policy settings of 2d in light of technological developments and incorporate more difficult-to-acquire data in collection frameworks including, but not limited to, additives in plastic materials	The parties will also be cognisant of international data standards and the need to balance plastics data with general

Response 3

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<p>3i Incorporate indicators of plastic use, waste management and pollution, including a Tier 1 Indicator for litter, into existing national frameworks and processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Environmental Reporting Programme</li> <li>ii) Indicators Aotearoa</li> <li>iii) Living Standards (wellbeing) Framework</li> <li>iv) Environmental-economic accounts</li> <li>v) Just Transitions initiatives</li> </ul>	<p>waste data.</p> <p>Consideration of incorporating available data into the five frameworks listed in recommendation 3i can only be done once initial exploration work is complete and the “plugging of gaps” is well advanced.</p> <p>We note that the Just Transitions component (3i(v)) is a community driven partnership approach, so identification of indicators would need to be led by the local community. MBIE can suggest but not commit them to including these indicators. The development and use of indicators would also need to be fit for purpose for the objectives being considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• New work building on existing workstreams</li> <li>• Lead agencies: MfE and StatsNZ</li> <li>• Establishment of a project and MfE resources in place by January 2021</li> <li>• Initial scoping work to understand the data gaps for plastic to be undertaken by January 2022</li> <li>• Further work programme conditional on initial scoping, feasibility and decisions</li> </ul>
<p>6a Quantify environmental leakage of plastics, building on existing research</p>	

### 3. Research

This group comprises recommendations for research projects that could be undertaken, with the findings disseminated for the public good. It also includes recommendations relating to improving the quality and standardisation of citizen science.

#	Recommendation	High-level response	
4l	Monitor for innovative ways to manage plastic waste and scale-up infrastructure to reduce reliance on, or phase out use of, landfill for plastic waste (including from 5a)	<p>Agree with the intent of this family of recommendations but prioritisation will be required.</p> <p>We are aware there is relevant work underway already on plastics. Relevant existing projects</p>	Response 4

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- 6 Identify knowledge gaps and develop research agenda related to hazards, impacts and remediation of plastics, aligning to international conventions and pacts and connecting with international research efforts, with a particular focus on:
- i) Impacts on local communities, taonga species and sites of significance to mana whenua
  - ii) Microplastics
  - iii) Environmental and food safety of recycled plastic and new materials
  - iv) Developing methods for monitoring nanoplastics and potential toxic effects of plastics
- 
- 6e Working with mana whenua, roll out nationwide microplastic monitoring for marine, terrestrial and air environments, and wastewater and landfill leachate
- 
- 6 Support and regularly review local and international research into the environmental and health impacts of plastics, including those from 6b, and ensure international connectivity (supports 6j)
- 
- 6j Support and regularly review long-term studies of environmental and health impacts of plastics

the Continuous Plankton Recorder programme samples microplastics in ocean surface waters using seabed camera footage to look at the abundance and distribution of plastics across benthic environments throughout the Exclusive Economic Zone. This work is in conjunction with plastic captures at sea reported by MPI observers on fishing boats.

working with the Department of Conservation on ways to mitigate and reduce the impact of fishing gear lost at sea on protected marine life (e.g. entanglement).

a risk profiling exercise to identify the data gaps preventing risk assessment of microplastics in the diet

funding a PhD to survey microplastics in the New Zealand diet and the bioavailability of plastics and contaminants. This research incorporates aspects of mātauranga Māori.

MfE (supported by other agencies as required) will coordinate a statement of priorities for plastics, that identifies the research needs, gaps, actors, and priorities. Following identification of priorities, agencies will consider options and available funding to support research, citizen science, mana whenua and community involvement, hazard identification and reduction, and innovation to rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle plastics, as funding allows. For 6h and 6j, MfE will consult with the Ministry of Health as required following the initial scoping work.

- Medium priority
- New work
- Lead agency: MfE, coordinating with other agencies as necessary
- Initial scoping work to establish a process to determine a statement of priorities as above by July 2021
- Further work programme building on the initial scoping work to consider addressing the other recommendations to be developed by July 2022

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4i	Facilitate access for organisations to life cycle assessment-based decision support tools, supported by NZ-specific datasets	<p>Agree with the intent.</p> <p>MfE will consider the role for Government and assess the demand and scope for tools of this nature before taking any additional action. This recommendation was intended to be implemented by 2025 and supported by recommendation 2d. Therefore, this response can be progressed on a longer timeframe while higher priority work is progressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low priority</li> <li>• New work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• MfE to undertake scoping for this project, to ascertain scope and feasibility, and anticipated end users for such products. It will do this by July 2021 and to determine next steps.</li> </ul>	Response 5
2 b	<p>Support standardisation and national roll-out for citizen science litter monitoring projects, including kaupapa Māori projects, ensuring:</p> <p>i) Alignment with international best practice methodologies</p> <p>ii) An open data policy, in line with the government-wide approach to increase openness and transparency</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>Citizen science is funded by MfE, MBIE and others. In relation to 2b, existing projects are underway to standardise collection methods. For example, working in collaboration with Statistics New Zealand and the Department of Conservation, Sustainable Coastlines provides training, equipment and technology to assist community groups to collect data in accordance with international standards. MfE, in consultation with StatsNZ and other agencies as required will consider options for developing expanded or similar initiatives.</p> <p>In relation to 5b, MBIE and MfE will consider building on the Action Areas and Integrating Action in <i>A Nation of Curious Minds: A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society</i>, e.g. by considering the upscaling of relevant existing citizen science projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-medium priority</li> <li>• Potential to build on existing work</li> <li>• Lead agencies: MfE, MBIE and StatsNZ</li> <li>• Initial scoping work to understand the opportunities, challenges, and funding available across agencies to be initiated by January 2021. Further work to be planned following that scoping work.</li> </ul>	Response 6
5 b	Share community initiatives and citizen science programmes and support their uptake in new contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-medium priority</li> <li>• Potential to build on existing work</li> <li>• Lead agencies: MfE, MBIE and StatsNZ</li> <li>• Initial scoping work to understand the opportunities, challenges, and funding available across agencies to be initiated by January 2021. Further work to be planned following that scoping work.</li> </ul>	

#### 4. Behaviour change

These recommendations relate to the government's education and regulatory levers for instigating behaviour change.

#	Recommendation	High-level response	
2c	Incentivise labelling of plastic type by	Agree with the intent of the recommendation. MfE is actively considering the requirements	Response 7

manufacturers (resin ID code)	<p>for recyclability labelling and undertaking work to consider options for standardising kerbside recycling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority for addressing recyclability labelling and standardising kerbside recycling</li> <li>• Existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Recommendations on next steps for recyclability labelling and standardisation of kerbside recycling to be made to Cabinet in late 2020/early 2021.</li> </ul>	Response 8
<p>3d Increase support for teachers to access resources where plastics is used as the context for teaching science, technology, social studies, sustainability and mātauranga Māori, and to utilise them in integrated, student-centred pedagogies</p>	<p>Agree with the intent.</p> <p>The existing <i>Curious Minds</i> programme provides a vehicle for advancing support for teachers, but is not specifically focussed on plastics. Action Area 1 under A Nation of Curious Minds: A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society includes the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve initial teacher education through increased science and technology teaching competencies, leading to increased confidence</li> <li>• Better in-service professional learning and development for science and technology teachers</li> <li>• Build stronger links between science and technology educators, learners, technologists and scientists, in the classroom and in the community.</li> </ul> <p>If additional targeted resources are required, MfE and MBIE could work together to consider the levers and funding available to respond to this recommendation. When designing the resources, supports, or initiatives as part of this response, MfE and MBIE will consider how these can be connected to broader concepts and big ideas of sustainability and the environment.</p> <p>There is also potential to leverage initiatives under the <i>Environmental Education for Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan</i>, which sets out priority areas for government agencies to focus on, towards the goal that all New Zealanders value a connection to our environment by actively working together for a sustainable future. MfE will consider whether this initiative is relevant when developing this response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority</li> <li>• New work building on existing content and programmes. Additional resources may be required</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE and MBIE. The Ministry of Education will be consulted on action taken as part of this response.</li> <li>• Initial scoping work to be undertaken by MfE and MBIE in 2021.</li> </ul>	
<p>3e Run national public awareness initiatives on plastic pollution, recycling and biodegradable or compostable plastics</p>	<p>Agree with the recommendation.</p> <p>Subject to scoping and agreement on funding, MfE will explore the potential of public awareness campaigns in relation to plastic pollution, recycling and biodegradable or compostable plastics, with a particular focus on supporting the implementation of other work underway relating to <i>Rethinking Plastics</i> such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a container return scheme</li> </ul>	Response 9

	<p>a new system for recyclability labelling</p> <p>a mandatory phase out of hard to recycle plastic packaging (subject to decisions)</p> <p>a mandatory phase out of single use plastic items (subject to decisions)</p> <p>changes to the Waste Levy</p> <p>standardised kerbside recycling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• New work extending existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Timeframes determined by other work streams</li> </ul>		
4c	<p>Mandate product stewardship for priority products that contain plastic currently under consultation, including:</p> <p>i) Packaging: include incentives to increase use of recycled plastic to strengthen markets for recycled plastic in NZ</p> <p>ii) Tyres: include approaches to reduce microplastics leakage</p> <p>iii) Farm plastics</p> <p>iv) Agrichemicals</p> <p>v) E-waste</p>	<p>Agree with the intent.</p> <p>This builds on existing policy work. MfE has consulted on having regulated product stewardship for six priority products: tyres, electrical and electronic products, agrichemicals and their containers, refrigerants and other synthetic greenhouse gases, farm plastics, and plastic packaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• Existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• The decision on declaration of priority products (enabling use of mandated participation regulation) was announced on 29 July 2020. Proposed regulations to enable mandated product stewardship for tyres and agrichemicals will be taken to public consultation in 2020/21 and final policy decisions will follow. Co-design processes for mandated product stewardship schemes (including proposed regulations) will conclude for farm plastics and progress for e-waste and plastic packaging.</li> </ul>	Response 10
4d	<p>Implement an industry-informed fit-for-purpose container deposit scheme (CDS)</p>	<p>Agree. This builds on existing policy work which will be continued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• Existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Policy decisions expected in late-2020 regarding whether to implement a scheme, with implementation thereafter</li> </ul>	Response 11

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<p>4f Increase recycling rates and quality by:</p> <p>i) Improving source separation (e.g. at kerbside; store drop-off; community recycling centres; new tech; CDS), with H&amp;S in mind</p> <p>ii) Standardising national recycling practice and ensuring equitable access</p> <p>iii) Implementing the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) to make it easy for individuals to act</p>	<p>Agree. This builds on a number of existing work streams including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standardising kerbside recycling</li> <li>container return scheme</li> <li>recyclability labelling</li> <li>product stewardship.</li> </ul> <p>– increased investment through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and waste levy funds</p> <p>These work streams should be continued with boosted resourcing in FY21.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• Existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Initial policy decisions for improving kerbside consistency and recycling labelling expected in late 2020/early 2021</li> </ul>	<p>Response 12</p>
<p>4h Develop and implement biodegradable and compostable plastics standards</p>	<p>Agree with the intent of this family of recommendations.</p>	<p>Response 13</p>
<p>4m Develop and implement recycling standard(s)</p>	<p>In the first instance, MfE will assess demand for these proposed standards and the likely impact on industries. Should one or more official New Zealand Standards be developed, MfE will engage with Standards New Zealand to scope the project(s) and undertake the established standards development process. A standard has no legal weight unless incorporated in regulations, although a standard can become a mainstream approach within an industry without legal compulsion. The Standards and Accreditation Act 2015 requires international standards to be considered for adoption in the first instance.</p>	
<p>6c Develop and implement manufacturing and pre-production plastic pellet handling standards and regulations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority</li> <li>• New work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Initial scoping work to be complete by July 2021.</li> </ul>	

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4k Use all regulatory and non-regulatory levers necessary to implement the best-practice expectations signalled in 4a

Agree with the intent.

This recommendation was marked for implementation "later", i.e. after 2025. It is contingent on the work done to address recommendation 4a. MfE will need to respond to recommendation 4a before this can be considered.

At the first instance, MfE will consider policy approaches that provide positive incentives for change to complement the regulatory regime in place.

- Low priority
- New work
- Lead agency: MfE
- Initial scoping work to be conducted after the completion of the response to 4a.

Response 14

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## 5. Sector engagement

Recommendations relating to sectors, innovation, and business.

Sector	#	Recommendation	High-level response
	3h	Undertake analyses to model the economic, socioeconomic and environmental benefits of changing to more sustainable plastic use on different sectors, e.g. i) Fisheries ii) Aquaculture iii) Construction iv) Agriculture v) Exports vi) Tourism	Agree with the intent of this family of recommendations. MfE has funding and resourcing to work with a sector (and the relevant agency) on a pilot project to consider the analysis and guidance that would be useful for achieving a step change in the way plastic is used. MfE already has existing work underway as part of its work on Regulated Product Stewardship for agrichemicals and farm plastics, and on farm dumps as part of the implementation of the Waste Levy. MfE will work with MBIE and MPI to ensure coordination with any relevant industry transformation plans and/or sector strategies. MFAT can provide support and input as needed on trade law obligations. Depending on the sector(s) to be involved, work that progresses must be cognisant of, and responsive to:
	4a	Co-design sector-specific best practice guidance on plastic use to signal how to align to a future NZ plastics system, accounting for impacts of the Basel Convention amendment	Work relating to waste reduction included in the Building for Climate Change programme (Construction)
Sectors	4j	Facilitate an active dialogue around rethinking plastics by setting targets and identifying opportunities to keep plastics in circulation or shift to more sustainable alternatives with individual sectors, including: i) Fisheries ii) Construction iii) Agriculture iv) Textile and fashion retail v) Tourism	The requirements of export destinations around packaging (Exports) Sector strategies and industry transformation plans Other reports the government is responding to, e.g. the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's report <i>Pristine, popular... imperilled?</i> The environmental consequences of projected tourism growth Existing industry commitments, e.g. the New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment, and the Sustainable Business Network (SBN) Masterclass Series (designed to create a circular economy for plastic packaging that works in New Zealand by 2025).
	4n	Evaluate sector progress and build on learnings to support development of other sector-specific action plans (e.g. healthcare, transport) (learning from 4j)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority</li> <li>• New work</li> <li>• Lead agencies: MfE, MBIE and MPI</li> <li>• Initial scoping work and sector engagement to commence by January 2020. Additional work to be mapped after initial scoping work and sector engagement.</li> </ul>

Response 15

Science	5a	<p>Attract research and innovation by offering a specific innovation fund to 'reimagine plastics', focusing on the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Infrastructure</li> <li>ii) Material science</li> <li>iii) Product design</li> <li>iv) Sustainability</li> <li>v) International connectivity</li> </ul> <p>Emphasising multidisciplinary approaches and drawing on areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Mātauranga Māori</li> <li>ii) Engineering</li> <li>iii) Social sciences</li> <li>iv) Biophysical sciences</li> <li>v) Economics</li> </ul>	<p>Agree with the intent but note that science, research and innovation funding opportunities exist for plastics already. <b>Response 16</b></p> <p>The report cites a wide variety of innovative ideas and research coming out of New Zealand companies, Universities and Crown Research Institutes in its scan of material innovations and their potential application in Aotearoa. This demonstrates a real strength in ideas and innovations being generated in this area. Much of this research has been supported directly and in-directly by government funding mechanisms. Existing channels for funding include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Science Investment Fund</li> <li>Endeavour Fund</li> <li>R&amp;D Project Grants</li> <li>R&amp;D tax incentive</li> <li>The Waste Minimisation Fund</li> <li>NZ Product Accelerator</li> <li>The Bioresource Processing Alliance.</li> </ul> <p>We agree with the report that connections between businesses and researchers to develop innovative solutions will be very important and that Callaghan Innovation has an important role to play in facilitating this. The Product Accelerator and the Bio-resource Processing Alliance are good examples of where government, through Callaghan Innovation, is supporting networks which bring together industry and researchers to develop innovative solutions in this and similar areas.</p> <p>Finally, we note that identification of research priorities is likely to encourage high impact plastics research and innovation. The research agenda for plastics intended to address recommendations 4l, 6b, 6e, 6h, and 6j could consider some of the areas suggested by recommendation 5a.</p>
Business	5c	<p>Build on successful innovative products and business models, e.g. those championed by the Sustainable Business Network</p>	<p>Agree with the intent of this family of recommendations. We interpret these recommendations as seeking to create an ecosystem for plastics and innovation where <b>Response 17</b></p>

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5d Make best practice standard practice by hosting expos (or a regional roadshow) to highlight and bring together innovative ideas from around the world related to plastics, including new technology, new materials, products, business models, design thinking, community initiatives and research, to drive further innovation and inspire others (including those funded through 5a; supports 5f, 5g)

5f Hold expo(s) every few years (pending 5d)

5g Monitor projects, ensure 'fail-fast' culture, and scale-up successful ones (based on 5a, 5d)

ideas are shared to scale up successful, innovative business models that drive greater waste reduction and re-use.

We note that the business community has commercial incentive to scale up successful innovations. Further, business.govt.nz (part of MBIE) already draw on SBN expertise to inform advice for businesses through business.govt.nz channels, including publication of specific sustainability content to support businesses. As noted above, SBN has also run the Masterclasses Series. Business.govt.nz's experience suggests these type of interventions can be more useful for small businesses and have greater reach than expos, given how busy small businesses are.

Through programmes like the product accelerator the government already supports networks of industry innovation through existing channels. Recommendation 5c is intended for immediate implementation while 5d is for implementation by 2025 and 5f and 5g are for implementation after that.

MfE will explore how it can support the broader ecosystem for plastics innovation through funding or other means, either by addressing the recommendations directly or in alternative ways.

- Low priority
- Build on existing work underway
- Lead agencies: MfE, working with the science and innovation community, including MBIE and Callaghan Innovation
- Initial scoping work to identify additional actions to begin in January 2021

5e Ensure rigorous testing of new materials and products made from recycled plastic before application

Agree with the intent of this recommendation.

**Response 18**

We are aware there are strong laws protecting consumers. However, MfE will work with relevant agencies to consider if there are weaknesses in the regime for ensuring new materials and products are fit for purpose before going to market.

- Low priority
- New work
- Lead agencies: MfE, working with relevant agencies across government
- Initial scoping work to be complete by 30 June 2021.

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6. Infrastructure

#	Recommendation	High-level response	
3c	Adapt the Waste Minimisation Fund process to be more user-friendly and aligned to a national plastics action plan	<p>Agree. MfE has work underway to improve the accessibility of the Waste Minimisation Fund.</p> <p>The 2020 Waste Minimisation Funding Round was focussed on complementing COVID-19 economic response packages. The fund should continue to evolve in response to the expansion of the waste levy including through process improvements and engagement with the sector. Improvements will be aligned to the broader Waste Strategy, under development in the latter half of 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• Existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Some Improvements to be made for the next funding round, with other to reflect and align with the expansion of the Waste Levy</li> </ul>	Response 19
4b	Expand the waste levy to all landfill types and increase tonnage cost to discourage landfilling of recyclable waste plastic and the use of single-use plastics	<p>Agree. Cabinet has approved an expansion of the Waste Levy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority, existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> <li>• Implementation timing will be confirmed when levy regulations are considered, and implementation will be progressively phased in.</li> </ul>	Response 20
4e	<p>Strategically invest in or incentivise development of systems and infrastructure to deal with our own plastic waste onshore, to support the best practice outlined in 4a and new schemes developed through 4c, including but not limited to:</p> <p>i) Onshore recycling of PET, HDPE, PP and possibly LDPE</p> <p>ii) Segregation of industrially compostable plastics</p>	<p>Agree with the intent behind these recommendations, noting that required investment will come from a range of sources, including central and local government and the private sector.</p> <p>4e, 4g, and 6f all require significant investment. MfE will: Forecast funding available from the waste levy</p>	Response 21
4g	Manage non-recyclable, non-compostable and non-biodegradable waste plastic in modern landfills		

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<p>4 Invest in equipment and technology to support the plastics manufacturing industry to manufacture bio-based plastics, including both biodegradable plastics and recyclable bio-based plastics at appropriate scale (learning from 5a)</p>	<p>Consider funding investment in plastics infrastructure projects in accordance with the New Zealand Waste Strategy, Waste Sector Infrastructure Plan, and Action &amp; Investment Plan (expected to be developed by July 2021).</p>
<p>6f Invest in prevention of landfill disasters, building on the national audit of at-risk landfills, to remediate issues or establish new facilities (coordinate with 4g)</p>	<p>All current investment of waste levy funds needs to be consistent with the provisions of the Waste Minimisation Act; it is proposed to review the Act in 2020/21, which will allow consideration of how levy funds can be invested. This review will consider whether investment in actions of the type set out at 6g and 6l should be included within the scope of the Act.</p>
<p>6 Commission a project to evaluate effectiveness, economics, and behavioural implications of different preventative measures for stopping macro and microplastic entering the environment to determine future efforts for NZ, e.g. public bins, washing machine filters, wastewater filtering processes, stormwater drain pipes, capturing at river mouth</p>	<p>Investment as per 4o and 6d will depend on agreed priorities, as per the statement of priorities for science and innovation confirmed as part of response 4. Consideration of 6d and 6l will be based on the response to 6d and following the review of the Act, as detailed above.</p>
<p>6g Invest in systems to prevent macro and microplastics entering the environment, take baseline data (based on findings from 6d; supports 6l)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority</li> <li>• Building on existing work</li> <li>• Lead agency: MfE</li> </ul>
<p>6l Evaluate effectiveness of preventing environmental leakage, scale and adapt accordingly (following from 6g)</p>	

7. International

IN CONFIDENCE

This group of recommendations tackles plastics issues through our relationships with the international community, including through trade, international organisations, and development spending. It seeks international solutions to help achieve government goals regarding plastics.

#	Recommendation	High-level response
3 b	Undertake a scoping exercise to determine the best ways to connect internationally to drive alignment around sustainable materials and consistent product stewardship for plastics e.g. using New Zealand membership of international trade agreements such as the CPTPP, PACER Plus, Trans-Tasman agreements and AANZFTA	<p>Agree. A whole-of-government response is required to ensure our actions offshore continue to align with our priorities onshore. MFAT and MfE will co-lead the response with support from other agencies as necessary.</p> <p>MFAT and MfE to identify existing international mechanisms (e.g. environmental agreements, trade agreements, forums / organisations that New Zealand is part of) to best drive alignment around sustainable materials and consistent product stewardship.</p> <p>Future work, including work to implement plastics action through the mechanisms identified in the scoping exercise, will depend on the outcomes of the actions above.</p> <p>MFAT and MfE will also work together to ensure trade policy is kept up to date. MfE and MFAT will involve MBIE in this work.</p>
3g	Begin implementation of plastics action in international agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium priority</li> <li>• New work</li> </ul>
3j	Ensure trade policy is kept up to date with evidence-based best practice on plastic import and export; advocate for international product stewardship principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead agencies: MfE, MFAT, with support from MBIE</li> <li>• MfE to appoint resource to this work by January 2021</li> <li>• MfE and MFAT to undertake initial scoping work by June 2021 with future work to be determined after that.</li> </ul>

Response 22

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IN CONFIDENCE

6i Identify areas where NZ development spending could help mitigate environmental and health impacts related to plastics, particularly for Pacific Island nations

Agree. MFAT currently addresses some of these recommendations through official development assistance (ODA) and will continue to assess new opportunities in line with Pacific Island countries' priorities. Currently New Zealand:

Response 23

6k Support remediation efforts (building on 6i)

Gives core funding to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which leads regional coordination and delivery of waste management and pollution control action, and which uses the region's strategic management framework, Cleaner Pacific 2025, as its guide

Supports the Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility to help Pacific Island countries plan and maintain infrastructure, including for recycling, waste and pollution

Supports countries bilaterally, e.g. Kiribati where we support improved waste management practices

Has previously supported remediation bilaterally, e.g. Tuvalu Borrow Pits

Actively encourages multilateral environment funds to invest in the fight against plastic pollution.

MFAT will seek technical advice from MfE, particularly where potential investments align with MfE's priorities e.g. Circular Economy Summit outcomes. MFAT will also continue to monitor remediation opportunities in the Pacific. As per above, MfE's dedicated policy staff and/or funding can support where appropriate.

- Medium priority
- New work for MfE, existing work for MFAT
- Lead agencies: MfE and MFAT
- MfE to appoint resource by January 2021

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**Appendix Two – Draft National Action Plan**

[See separate attachment]

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# Rethinking Plastics

BASIS FOR ACTION

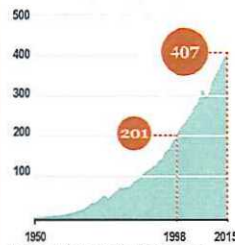
Taking action on plastic waste is a key step in New Zealand's journey towards a low waste economy, with an effective resource recovery and recycling system.

Rethinking Plastics was produced by the office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in December 2019.

It challenges us to change our relationship with plastics, from a material that is cheap and disposable, to a valuable resource that is reused and repaired. Innovation and new materials will help us to use less plastics, and lessen our reliance on recycling and disposal. Efforts need to be ongoing and coordinated so that best practice becomes standard practice.

## 4 Why we need to act

GLOBAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION OVER TIME, IN MILLION TONNES



Sources: Plastics in the Environment 2019, Royal Society Te Aparangi

Millions of tonnes of plastic enter aquatic and marine ecosystems annually, endangering wildlife and human health.

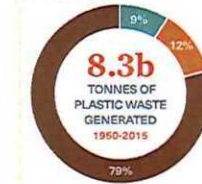
Most plastic produced is from fossil fuels, consuming around 4-8 per cent of global oil production. Rapid growth in plastic production is projected.

New Zealand is one of the highest generators of household waste in the OECD, and our waste continues to grow.

International commitments, initiatives and partnerships have been established to mobilise global action against plastic waste.

## 7 Where plastics are ending up

GLOBAL PLASTIC WASTE DISPOSAL AND TREATMENT



Sources: Plastics in the Environment 2019, Royal Society Te Aparangi

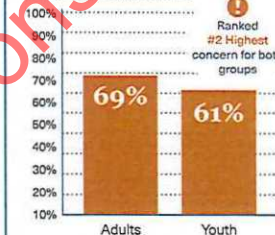
RATIO OF PLASTICS TO FISH IN WORLD OCEANS (BY WEIGHT)



Sources: Rethinking Plastics 2019

## 1 New Zealanders are concerned about plastic waste

PROPORTION OF NEW ZEALANDERS CONCERNED ABOUT PLASTIC BUILD-UP IN THE ENVIRONMENT, 2020



Source: 2020 Better Futures, Colmar Brunton

The 2020 Better Futures Report by Colmar Brunton highlighted the build-up of plastic waste in the environment as one of the top concerns for New Zealanders.

The Royal Society Te Aparangi 2019 report Plastics in the Environment, found plastic pollution affects our recreational, cultural and spiritual values as New Zealanders. Build-up of plastic waste in our ecosystem can interfere with the mauri (life force) of our environment and has negative economic impacts.

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE AND WORK STREAMS

#### Our vision

New Zealand's plastic use is sustainable and innovative – plastics are used in a way that benefits society and protects the environment.

#### A whole-of-government work programme to achieve systemic change

Government is committed to taking actions to mitigate the negative impacts of plastics, while retaining its many benefits.

- Transformational projects are already underway, and important new projects are planned
- Coordination and leverage of existing projects further strengthens our response – identifying and filling gaps, maximising synergies, and sharing lessons. Central government, local government, industry, research institutes and academia, and communities are already working to improve the use, reuse and disposal of plastics.

#### LEARN

Inform, change, and drive innovation.

#### ENABLE

Support and enable local government, sector, business, community and individual action.

#### COORDINATE

Lead, coordinate, consolidate and demonstrate.

#### CONTRIBUTE

Play a part in international solutions, to help us achieve our goals on plastics.



### Timeline of workstream activities

TIMELINE KEY:

- Projects (in progress)
- Projects (planned)
- Complementary activities in progress

WORKSTREAM	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE STATE	JUL – DEC 2020	JAN – JUN 2021	JUL – DEC 2021	ONGOING TO 2030
<b>Government</b>	No national action plan or strategy for plastic.	Coordinated, action-led and enabled by central government. Whole-of-government vision and national plastic targets established. Government is best practice exemplar, circular economy is understood and progressed.	1 Governance Group			2 Government Procurement, scope, develop guidance + MBIE
<b>Data &amp; information</b>	Data on plastics is fragmented, incomplete and difficult to access.	NZ has robust data to track and inform change. Framework showing plastics flow across NZ – from design, use, reuse to end of life. Quality data is collected and easily accessed.				3 Data – audit, identify gaps, scope system (+StatsNZ)
<b>Research &amp; innovation</b>	No coordinated plastics research programme – knowledge gaps, low focus on innovation.	Government informs a Plastics Research Programme that drives innovation and plastics harm reduction (public good focus). Research is coordinated and focuses on set priorities and information gaps.				4 Identify priorities to encourage high impact R & D 5 Lifecycle assessment, decision tool, scope 6 Citizen Science – standardise and support (+MBIE, StatsNZ)
<b>Behaviour change</b>	High public and business concern, limited options to reduce plastics and improve disposal.	Individuals, communities, and businesses know how to best reduce and dispose of plastics, and the system supports them to do the right thing. Voluntary standards incentivise best business practice, and are supported by regulation.				7 Labelling consistency and incentivisation 8 Increased teacher access to resources – scope 9 Design public campaigns to support behaviour change
<b>Sector engagement</b>	Lack of consistent, accessible information on plastics for sectors.	Sectors know how to best reduce and dispose of plastics, and the system supports them to do the right thing. Sectors and business innovate to improve their sustainability and use of plastics.				10 (a) Product Stewardship Schemes – under development 10 (b) Regulations and implementation 11 (a) Container Return Scheme – co-design 11 (b) Container Return Scheme – implementation 12 Increased recycling supports, including kerbside consistency 13 Standards developed (+ regulation if needed)
<b>Infrastructure</b>	NZ is one of the highest generators of household waste in the OECD	NZ is incentivised to reuse, recycle and reduce plastics to landfill. Plastic waste is recycled or commercially composted on-shore. Harm from waste disposal is minimised				Hard-to-recycle and single-use plastics phase outs 2025 15 (a) Sector Pilot – scope (+MBIE, MPI) 15 (b) Expand pilot to additional sectors (+MBIE, MPI) 17 Support successful product and business model innovations – scope Small business toolkits and resources – disseminate
<b>International</b>	Opportunity for a more strategic approach to the international plastics agenda	Whole-of-government approach to international engagement on plastics, targeting agreed priority forums, organisations and mechanisms.				19 WMF – Continue to improve processes and improve engagement with sector 20 Waste Levy Expansion (timing TBC) 21 Major infrastructure projects – prioritise and advance Implement amendments to Basel Convention to better manage the international trade of plastic waste (+MFAT) Jan 2021 22 Whole-of-government international approach (+MFAT) 23 Development support in the Pacific – assess, plastics mitigation (+MFAT)

### Appendix Three - Updates on key initiatives underway to improve our recycling system

#### *Standardising kerbside collection*

- 1 The *Rethinking Plastics* report recommends improving the collection of recycling from households (kerbside collection). The current system is heavily inconsistent with territorial authorities wanting central Government guidance on best practice. More consistency at the kerbside reduces the amount of waste to landfill, and – critically – provides more resources that can be recycled domestically or offshore.
- 58 Between March and May 2020, the Ministry for the Environment and industry representative group WasteMINZ held successful online national and territorial authority consultation on measures to improve consistency of kerbside collection.
- 59 To take this work forward, work will continue with Local Government New Zealand to develop a strategic direction for kerbside collection, on the back of the sector consultation. The key features of the strategic direction will be:
  - 59.1 a standardised set of materials that should be collected in a recycling system (unanimous support);
  - 59.2 an announcement that the Ministry for the Environment will develop national education messages for households on best practice, starting with consistent materials to be collected;
  - 59.3 an outline of non-binding “best practice” approaches to collection of recyclable materials, dependent on local populations and geography. This will be a valuable guide for territorial authorities;
  - 59.4 agreement that organics (domestic food waste) collection is part of a best practice collection, given that organics make up at least 50% of kerbside collections and are responsible for a significant proportion of methane emissions from landfills;
  - 59.5 an invitation to reconvene the sector in mid - 2021 in order to confirm a ten-year roadmap (including targets, funding, incentives, support and regulatory/legislative levers if needed).
- 60 This strategic direction will create a strong signal on its own for councils to move towards improved kerbside collection systems.
- 61 It is important that a partnership approach is taken with local government on this issue. Evidence suggests that the costs to the community of kerbside recycling approaches that improve quality of recyclables are no higher (or not significantly higher) than current systems. Moreover, additional revenue will also become available to territorial authorities as early as 2022 for the

purposes of waste minimisation through the expansion of the Waste Disposal Levy.

- 62 Nonetheless, decisions on particular kerbside approaches still need to be the decision of local authorities. It will be important to manage any additional and/or transition costs for councils carefully, and ensure that regional needs are considered.

*On product recycling label*

- 63 New Zealanders want to do the right thing but are unclear on how and what to recycle. A clear and accurate on-product recycling label can support the public to recycle 'better' and reduce the amount of contamination in the recycling bin. It can also enable the public to make more informed purchasing decisions and can incentivise producers to rethink their packaging at the design phase.

- 64 In line with the recommendations from the *Rethinking Plastics* report, the Ministry for the Environment has conducted preliminary research into options for a New Zealand recycling label. The research considered three options:

- 64.1 increasing the use of the current international Plastic Identification Codes (Resin ID numbers e.g. plastic type 1);
- 64.2 adopting or adapting an existing recycling labelling scheme
- 64.3 developing a new domestic recycling labelling scheme

- 65 s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s 9(2)(j)
- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- 68 s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- [Redacted]

69 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s 9(2)(j) [redacted]  
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s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
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s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s 9(2)(j) [redacted]  
s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
s 9(2)(f)(iv) and s 9(2)(j) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]

*Container Return Scheme*

71 It has now been established that an estimated 2.36 billion glass, plastic, aluminium and liquid paper board single-use beverage containers were sold to New Zealand consumers in 2018/19. Estimates for recovery of beverage containers vary by source and product material type. Based on previous estimates of 45% - 58% recovery for all beverage container types, and assuming a more optimistic scenario of 60%, an estimated 944 million beverage containers could end up as either landfill or litter in New Zealand every year.

72 I announced a project to co-design a Container Return Scheme (CRS) on 25 September 2019. A container return scheme is a form of product stewardship that increases recovery rates through the application of a refundable deposit to consumers on each container returned (for example, 10 cents, 20 cents, or 30 cents). The scheme in Germany is one of the highest performing globally, with a 98% recovery rate for single-use beverage containers.

73 The CRS project is funded through the Ministry for the Environment's Waste Minimisation Fund, and began in November 2019. The project will finalise its

<sup>20</sup> While this would not provide the much-needed information to consumers it may support effective sorting and processing of plastics for recycling, particularly for manually operated Material Recovery Facilities

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report and recommendations for the design of a New Zealand scheme by the end of October 2020, enabling subsequent Ministerial and Cabinet consideration and a decision on implementation to be made. .

- 74 The project is jointly led by Auckland Council and Marlborough District Council with broad stakeholder representation through a Design Working Group, overseen by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of relevant subject area experts.
- 75 The CRS co-design facilitates stakeholders to be directly involved in the design process, providing an opportunity for wide ranging feedback. Critically, this includes representation from the beverage, retail and packaging sectors, alongside recyclers and local government where the substantial financial costs of kerbside recycling currently sit. Other key stakeholder representatives involved include consumers, youth, charities, mana whenua and product stewardship groups. Once the draft design is completed, the scheme Design Working Group and TAG will assess how the scheme design delivers on the below outcomes, principles and opportunities.
- 76 Key Outcomes:
- 76.1 change the way New Zealand values beverage containers that will see increased recycling and new opportunities for refilling;
  - 76.2 reduce the volume of plastics and other container litter currently ending up in our streams, marine environment, public spaces and landfills;
  - 76.3 give effect to circular economy outcomes and any priority product guidelines.
- 77 Key guiding principles:
- 77.1 make it easier and convenient to return containers across New Zealand;
  - 77.2 design a solution that is cost effective and efficient;
  - 77.3 improve quality and marketability of recyclables and assess impact of design on current kerbside and other collection and processing systems;
  - 77.4 create new opportunities for employment, community participation and fund-raising for charities and social enterprises.
- 78 Key opportunities
- 78.1 use technology and innovations to optimise performance of the CRS;
  - 78.2 support greater investment in remanufacturing and regional development;
  - 78.3 align objectives with the Treaty of Waitangi and te ao Māori;

78.4 mitigate climate change.

79 s 9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

S 9(2)(f)(iv) and s 9(2)(ba)

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

s 9(2)(j) and s 9(2)(ba)  
s 9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Proactively released under the provisions  
of the Official Information Act 1982

s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

80 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [Redacted]

81 It is expected that proposals for a container return scheme could be submitted to Cabinet in late 2020. Should a decision to implement be made, regulations and public consultation to enable the establishment of scheme will be required. This could happen under the existing Waste Minimisation Act 2008, or should the current provisions prove inadequate to implement a scheme, as a part of a wider planned review of the Act. In either case, the establishment of a New Zealand scheme would require substantial further work and engagement, with a provisional scheme 'go live' date in 2023.

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