



PROACTIVE RELEASE COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Nicola Grigg	Portfolio	Environment
Name of package	Environment Reporting Amendment Bill Approval for Introduction	Date to be published	7 August 2026

List of documents that have been proactively released

Date	Title	Author
21 May 2026	Cabinet paper: Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction	Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport
21 May 2026	LEG-26-MIN-0093 Cabinet Legislation Committee Minute of Decision	New Zealand Cabinet
25 May 2026	CAB-26-MIN-0178 Cabinet Minute of Decision	New Zealand Cabinet

Information redacted YES

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport's policy on proactive release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Summary of reasons for redaction

Some information has been withheld from CAB-26-MIN-0178 Cabinet Minute of Decision as it is out of scope.

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for the Environment

Cabinet Legislation Committee**Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction****Proposal**

- 1 I propose that the Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG) authorises the submission of the Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill (Bill) for introduction in the House of Representatives.
- 2 This Bill is included as Attachment 1 to this paper and amends the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 (ERA).

Background

- 3 The ERA ensures that robust and credible environmental data and research is made available to the public and decision-makers. It is New Zealand's national level focal point for the collation of data, research and reporting on the state of our natural and built environments, analysis of the interactions between them, and their relationship to our economy, society and public health.
- 4 However, the ERA's inflexible structure results in inefficiencies in the reporting programme. Reports are not always produced at the right time, or focused on key environmental issues, to support decision-makers. Data gaps, and inconsistent data collection and analysis in some areas, also make it hard to construct a clear national picture of the state of our environment and determine whether it is getting better or worse. This has impacted the Government's ability to make informed decisions about the environment.
- 5 In 2019, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) reviewed the environmental reporting system and identified several areas for improvement, including enhancing system coherence, refining the purpose and focus of national reporting, and clarifying institutional roles. Since then, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and Stats NZ have focused on amending the ERA in line with these recommendations.
- 6 A review of the previous Government's proposed reforms of this legislation determined that the proposed amendments did not align with current Government policy priorities. Cabinet agreed to rescind the previous Government's proposed changes (as recorded in ENV-22-MIN-0030 and ENV-22-MIN-0056) in favour of a more focused package of amendments (ECO-25-MIN-0051 and CAB-25-MIN-0125 refer). This decision directly aligns with the Government's ongoing priorities, including the Resource Management System Reform and the National Adaptation Framework.

- 7 The proposed changes to the ERA are required to address barriers to the reporting programme efficiency and effectiveness. These changes will minimise cost burdens, particularly for local government, and mandate good practice of environmental reporting.
- 8 The amendments will also increase the efficiency of the reporting programme by reducing the number of reports from twelve to seven over a six-year period, improve data quality, accessibility and analysis, and ensure that reports provide timely, focused insights that inform the development of policy and action. The amendments will also provide better guidance on strengthening data and environmental research.

Policy

- 9 The Bill was given a category 5 priority on the 2026 Legislation Programme: to be referred to Select Committee, but not enacted, before the 2026 General Election.
- 10 On 14 April 2025, Cabinet agreed to several amendments to the ERA (ECO-25-MIN-0051 and CAB-25-MIN-0125 refer). Cabinet authorised the issue of drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) to give effect to these decisions.
- 11 The Bill gives effect to Cabinet's decisions to make targeted amendments to the ERA as outlined below. These are:

Amend the purpose of the ERA to clarify the intended use and outcome of reporting

- 12 Amend the purpose of the ERA to require regular reports on New Zealand's environment which inform New Zealanders about the state of the environment and support evidence-based decisions that lead to effective and enduring environmental stewardship.

Reduce the frequency of state of the environment reports to six-yearly

- 13 Amend the ERA to rename 'synthesis' reports as 'state of the environment' reports and make the frequency of state of the environment reports six-yearly, replacing the current three-year cycle.

Replace six-monthly domain reports with at least one commentary report each year

- 14 Amend the ERA to rename 'domain' reports to 'commentary' reports and require at least one commentary report per year excluding the year that the state of the environment report is due to be published.
- 15 Amend the ERA to enable commentary reports to cover topics across emerging issues and different environmental domains (so long as the full list of all topics set in regulations is covered between state of the environment reports across all domains), maintaining other requirements as in section 11 of the current ERA for domain reports.

- 16 Require the Secretary for the Environment to consider the recommendations of a strategic evidence panel (see paragraph 25 below) on matters related to environmental data, monitoring and reporting, including what commentary reports should be published and the matters each report should cover.

Strengthen the mechanisms for collecting data and setting data collection standards

- 17 Replace sections 8(3) and 11(3) of the ERA with a requirement for the Secretary for the Environment and the Government Statistician to make reasonable efforts to proactively collect data through voluntary agreements with other entities.
- 18 Require the Secretary for the Environment to specify scientific environmental monitoring standards and methods for the collection of indicator data for environmental reporting, which may include deeming standards and methods set in other legislation or regulations sufficient for environmental reporting.

Produce a six-yearly data and evidence priorities report

- 19 Introduce a new requirement for the Secretary for the Environment, in consultation with the Government Statistician, to produce a data and evidence priorities report within six months of every state of the environment report. This report will discuss the state of environmental data, monitoring and research, evaluate the quality and coverage of indicators, list recommended indicators for environmental reporting, and identify priority areas for improving data and evidence.

Add drivers and outlooks as required components of the environmental reporting framework

- 20 Amend the ERA to also include, in all reports, drivers (human influences and natural conditions that drive environmental change) and outlooks (how the state of the environment may change based on current data and trends and likely impacts on the environment in the future).

Enable reporting on progress towards government priorities

- 21 Amend the ERA so that, at the discretion of the Secretary for the Environment, reports may compare findings on the environment and changes to it over time to long-term policy outcomes, targets, goals or limits set in relevant environmental legislation.

Adjust reporting roles and responsibilities for the Secretary for the Environment and the Government Statistician

- 22 Amend the ERA to clearly delineate the responsibilities of the Secretary for the Environment and the Government Statistician such that:

22.1 the Secretary would be responsible for:

- 22.1.1 producing and publishing environmental reports
- 22.1.2 preparing advice to the Minister for the Environment on Topic Regulations to define scope and coverage requirements for environmental domains
- 22.1.3 defining a set of environmental indicators to measure topics prescribed in regulation (in consultation with the Government Statistician).
- 22.2 the Government Statistician would be responsible for:
 - 22.2.1 producing statistics for use in environmental reports
 - 22.2.2 updating and publishing environmental indicators on a website (available to the public).
- 23 Repeal section 17 of the ERA (Protecting integrity of untested information). Section 17 provided for the Government Statistician to control early release of statistics. Any early release of statistics can now be managed under section 46 of the Data and Statistics Act 2022.
- 24 Amend the ERA to make the Minister for the Environment responsible for presenting the environmental reports to the House and recommending topic regulations to the Governor-General.

The appointment of a strategic evidence panel to provide independent expert advice

- 25 Amend the ERA to require the Secretary for the Environment, in consultation with the Minister for the Environment, to appoint a Strategic Evidence Panel to provide independent advice to the Secretary for the Environment (on request or at the panel's own initiative). The panel is to consist of no fewer than 7 and no more than 9 members each appointed for up to 3 years, who collectively hold relevant expertise on matters related to environmental data, monitoring and reporting.

Links to Resource Management (RM) Reform and Government Priorities

- 26 Improvements to environmental reporting are consistent with the Government's intent and approach in the Planning Act and the Natural Environment Act; and align with the RM system reform and the National Adaptation Framework work programme.
- 27 The proposed Bill would meet several policies in Coalition agreements and *Blueprint for a Better Future* by:
 - 27.1 enabling evidence-based decisions and driving action by making high-quality information and data available to a wide range of stakeholders
 - 27.2 tracking performance to deliver results, improve government approach, and ensure accountability

- 27.3 improving efficiency by clarifying roles and responsibilities
- 27.4 promoting cost-effective access to expert advice and holistic analysis of effective interventions.
- 28 More specifically:
 - 28.1 more flexible reporting cycles will enable officials to focus on reporting new and useful information, instead of 'repackaging' existing information. This will make the framework more efficient and cost effective.
 - 28.2 the establishment of Data and Evidence Priorities Report will help drive focus on investment in the data and evidence that matters most.
- 29 Amendments to the ERA are relatively minor. I expect the Bill to be largely uncontentious, given alignment with findings by the PCE, engagement undertaken during its development, general agreement across the science sector, and a level of consistency with the previous government's decisions. There may be some debate about the adequacy of the information gathering powers (which are relatively narrow in scope) and also the lack of explicit provision for mātauranga Māori and Māori data sovereignty in the bill.

Impact analysis

- 30 Regulatory Impact Assessment requirements apply to policy proposals in this paper.
- 31 A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) has been completed. The RIS includes a cost benefit analysis. A quality assurance panel with members from the Ministry for the Environment has reviewed the RIS and associated supporting material on 24 February 2025.
- 32 The panel considered the document partially meets the quality assurance criteria for regulatory impact analysis.
- 33 The panel's Quality Assurance Statement reads: "While the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) is generally clear and concise, it would benefit from additional evidence in the options analysis and cost benefit analysis under each proposal to better meet the completeness criterion. Similarly, the RIS could have gained from a broader public consultation, rather than relying solely on the targeted engagement that was conducted. This additional information would provide a more robust foundation for decision-making and enhance the overall effectiveness of the statement."

Compliance

- 34 All amendments described in this paper are consistent with:
 - 34.1 the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

- 34.2 the rights and freedoms contained in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.
- 34.3 the disclosure statement requirements, and the disclosure statement is attached as Attachment 2.
- 34.4 the principles and guidelines set out in the Privacy Act 2020.
- 34.5 relevant international standards and obligations.
- 34.6 the Legislation Guidelines (2021 edition), which are maintained by the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee.

Consultation

- 35 This paper was prepared by the Ministry for the Environment, working closely with Stats NZ.
- 36 The following agencies were consulted on this paper and during the development of policy: Department of Conservation, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Environmental Protection Authority, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry for Primary Industries, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Ministry for Regulation, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Transport, Te Arawhiti, The Treasury, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand, Public Service Commission.
- 37 Responses on this paper were received from Department of Conservation, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Environmental Protection Authority, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry for Primary Industries, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.
- 38 Separate engagement was undertaken with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.
- 39 Feedback from agencies related to reporting responsiveness, data management and alignment with national and international frameworks, mātauranga Māori and Māori data sovereignty and legislating environmental outcomes.
- 40 Where appropriate agency feedback has been incorporated into the draft Bill.
- 41 Ministerial consultation on the proposed amendments was undertaken over the period 5-12 May 2026. Feedback from the Minister of Foreign Affairs' office noted New Zealand has international environmental reporting obligations under various Multilateral Environmental Agreements. These international reporting obligations will continue to apply to New Zealand, despite the proposed amendments. Further, the Bill's amendments are not inconsistent with New Zealand's various Free Trade Agreement (FTA) trade and

environment non-regression obligations (for example FTAs with the European Union and the United Kingdom and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). No other feedback was received and the draft Bill was not changed.

Binding on the Crown

42 This Act binds the Crown.

Creating new agencies or amending law relating to existing agencies

43 This legislation will continue to be administered by the Ministry for the Environment. No new agency is needed.

Allocation of decision-making powers

44 The allocation of decision-making powers between the executive, the courts, and tribunals will not be altered by this legislation.

45 The allocation of decision-making powers is limited to a clarification of roles and responsibilities between the Secretary and the Government Statistician. The clarification is based on the skill-base and general areas of responsibilities for each of these roles.

Associated regulations

46 No associated regulations are needed.

Other instruments

47 The Bill retains a provision empowering the Governor-General, on the joint recommendation of the Ministers, to make regulations by Order in Council prescribing the legislative topics to be covered in both the state of the environment reports and the commentary reports, as set out in section 19 of the bill. No new legislative topics are being introduced under this Bill, and no provision is included empowering the making of other instruments.

Definition of Minister/department

48 The ERA already contains definitions of the relevant Ministers, departments, and chief executives involved in administering the functions, duties and powers under it. These definitions will not be amended by the proposed Bill.

49 I note on 1 July 2026, if the Environment (Disestablishment of Ministry for the Environment) Amendment Bill is passed, MfE will be disestablished. MfE's existing functions under the Environmental Reporting Act will become the functions of the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport.

Commencement of legislation

50 The Bill will come into force six months after the date on which the Bill receives Royal assent (commencement date).

Parliamentary stages

51 The Bill is intended to be referred to Select Committee, but not enacted, before the 2026 General Election.

52 I propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Select Committee.

Proactive Release

53 I propose proactively releasing this paper on the Ministry's website, subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982, within 30 business days of final decisions being confirmed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **note that** on 14 April 2025, Cabinet agreed to make the following amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 (ECO-25-MIN-0051 and CAB-25-MIN-0125 refer):
 - 1.1 Amend the purpose of the ERA to clarify the intended use and outcome of reporting.
 - 1.2 Reduce the frequency of state of the environment reports to six-yearly.
 - 1.3 Replace six-monthly domain reports with at least one commentary report each year.
 - 1.4 Strengthen the mechanisms for collecting data and setting data collection standards.
 - 1.5 Produce a six-yearly data and evidence priorities report.
 - 1.6 Add drivers and outlooks as required components of the environmental reporting framework.
 - 1.7 Enable reporting on progress towards government priorities.
 - 1.8 Adjust reporting roles and responsibilities for the Secretary for the Environment and the Government Statistician.
 - 1.9 The appointment of a Strategic Evidence Panel to provide independent expert advice.
- 2 **note** that the Bill holds a category 5 priority on the 2026 Legislation Programme.
- 3 **note** that the Bill changes multiple provisions from the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 including its purpose, the reporting framework, roles and responsibilities (including forming a Strategic Evidence Panel), data collection provisions, the focus, timing and type of reporting to be published.

- 4 **approve** the Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill for introduction, subject to the final approval of the Government caucus and sufficient support in the House of Representatives.
- 5 **agree** that the Bill be introduced in June 2026.
- 6 **agree** that the government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Nicola Grigg
Minister for the Environment

Appendices

Appendix 1: Environment Reporting Amendment Bill

Appendix 2: Departmental Disclosure Statement – Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio **Environment**

On 21 May 2026, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **noted** that in April 2025, Cabinet agreed to make the following amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 (ERA):
 - 1.1 amend the purpose of the ERA to clarify the intended use and outcome of reporting;
 - 1.2 reduce the frequency of state of the environment reports to six-yearly;
 - 1.3 replace six-monthly domain reports with at least one commentary report each year;
 - 1.4 strengthen the mechanisms for collecting data and setting data collection standards;
 - 1.5 produce a six-yearly data and evidence priorities report;
 - 1.6 add drivers and outlooks as required components of the environmental reporting framework;
 - 1.7 enable reporting on progress towards government priorities;
 - 1.8 adjust reporting roles and responsibilities for the Secretary for the Environment and the Government Statistician;
 - 1.9 the appointment of a Strategic Evidence Panel to provide independent expert advice;

[ECO-25-MIN-0051]
- 2 **noted** that the Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill (the Bill) holds a category 5 priority on the 2026 Legislation Programme (to proceed to select committee before the 2026 election);
- 3 **noted** that the Bill gives effect to the decisions in paragraph 1 above;
- 4 **approved** the Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill [PCO 22564/7.0] for introduction;
- 5 **authorised** the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make technical changes to the structure of the Bill up until introduction;
- 6 **agreed** that the Bill be introduced in June 2026;

- 7 **agreed** that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston (Chair)
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Nicola Grigg
Hon James Meager
Hon Scott Simpson
Hon Cameron Brewer
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Stuart Smith MP
Jamie Arbuckle MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
Officials Committee for LEG



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 22 May 2026

On 25 May 2026, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 22 May 2026:

Out of scope

LEG-26-MIN-0093 **Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill: Approval** CONFIRMED
for Introduction
Portfolio: Environment

Out of scope

Out of scope



Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet