

# Updating National Direction: New National Policy Statement for Infrastructure

**December 2025**

Recent changes have been made to national direction under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to make the resource management system work more effectively.

This document explains how the new National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I) will guide the efficient development and management of infrastructure in New Zealand.

## Context

Currently, the benefits of infrastructure and its essential role in supporting the wellbeing, health and safety of communities are not well recognised through the resource management system. As a result, decision-making often undervalues the strategic importance of infrastructure and consents are declined based on local environmental impacts. There is also inconsistency in infrastructure-related decisions across the country, with long-term planning for infrastructure networks poorly coordinated with local land use planning. The resulting consent process is uncertain, variable, costly and complex, leading to delays and increased expenses for infrastructure projects.

Changes are required to better recognise the vital role of infrastructure in supporting community wellbeing, health and safety and to enable its development or maintenance. Infrastructure also needs to be considered as an interconnected network serving the public good, rather than as isolated assets.

The NPS-I requires decision-makers to recognise infrastructure as a matter of national significance under the RMA and provides policy to support its development, maintenance and upgrades while still addressing adverse impacts. Over time, it will support more consistent, coordinated planning and development of infrastructure that meets community needs and supports long-term planning and resilience from climate change.

# Key policies of the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure

## The 11 policies provide the following framework:

- Policy 1: Providing for the benefits of infrastructure
- Policy 2: Operational need or functional need of infrastructure to be in particular locations and environments
- Policy 3: Considering spatial planning
- Policy 4: Enabling the efficient and timely operation and delivery of infrastructure activities
- Policy 5: Recognising and providing for infrastructure supporting activities
- Policy 6: Recognising and providing for Māori interests
- Policy 7: Assessing and managing the effects of proposed infrastructure activities
- Policy 8: Operation, maintenance and minor upgrade of existing infrastructure
- Policy 9: Managing the effects of new infrastructure and major upgrades
- Policy 10: Planning for and managing the interface and compatibility of infrastructure with other activities
- Policy 11: Assessing and managing the interface between infrastructure and other activities.

The NPS-I applies to all decisions made under the RMA affecting the operation, maintenance, renewal and upgrade of existing infrastructure, as well as to the development of new infrastructure.

It does not apply to:

- renewable electricity generation activities and assets managed under the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011 (as amended 2025)
- the electricity transmission network and electricity distribution network activities and assets managed under the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (formerly National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008, as amended in 2025)
- the allocation and prioritisation of freshwater, because these are matters for regional councils to address in a catchment or regional context.

## Policy 1: Providing for the benefits of infrastructure

Decision-makers must ensure the national, regional or local benefits of infrastructure, relative to localised adverse effects, are recognised and provided for. Decision-makers must also recognise the risks to wellbeing and public safety that arise if infrastructure services are compromised.

Infrastructure benefits include supporting social, cultural and economic wellbeing; urban and rural development; providing essential services; protecting the environment; mitigating the effects of climate change; and improving resilience to natural hazards and climate change.

## **Policy 2: Operational need or functional need of infrastructure to be in particular locations and environments**

The NPS-I directs decision-makers to recognise that infrastructure may have a functional or operational need to be in a particular location, including so that it can provide services, function efficiently, maintain connectivity and manage risks from natural hazards.

## **Policy 3: Considering spatial planning**

The NPS-I requires decision-makers to have regard to strategic plans prepared by local authorities and transport authorities, and to consider spatial plans and master plans prepared by infrastructure providers.

## **Policy 4: Enabling the efficient and timely operation and delivery of infrastructure activities**

Decision-makers are required to enable the efficient and timely delivery of infrastructure, including by providing flexibility for infrastructure providers to use new technology for better results. The NPS-I also encourages making the most of existing infrastructure and of opportunities to improve services, and preparing for future needs and environmental challenges.

The NPS-I also requires decision-makers to recognise it is the role of infrastructure providers to identify the preferred location for infrastructure.

## **Policy 5: Recognising and providing for infrastructure supporting activities**

Infrastructure supporting activities are those activities that are needed to directly support infrastructure but are not part of the infrastructure activity itself. Decision-makers must recognise and provide for these supporting activities.

## **Policy 6: Recognising and providing for Māori interests**

Decision-makers must recognise and provide for Māori interests. Requirements include taking into account the outcomes of engagement with iwi/Māori, recognising opportunities for Māori to develop and operate infrastructure, and recognising opportunities for Māori involvement where infrastructure may affect a site of significance or issue of cultural significance to Māori.

Local authorities must remain aware of their responsibilities under other legislation, including the Local Government Act 2002, Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993, Treaty settlement legislation and iwi participation legislation, and under the Treaty of Waitangi. Obligations under Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreements with relevant hapū and iwi should also be observed.

## **Policy 7: Assessing and managing the effects of proposed infrastructure activities**

The NPS-I includes a list of requirements that decision-makers must have regard to when assessing and managing the effects of an infrastructure proposal. The requirements include site selection, operational requirements, the extent to which effects are different from those of existing infrastructure and taking into account recognised standards and best practices in New Zealand.

## **Policy 8: Operation, maintenance and minor upgrade of existing infrastructure**

Decision-makers are directed to further enable the efficient operation and maintenance and minor upgrade of existing infrastructure, provided that, where practicable, adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

## **Policy 9: Managing the effects of new infrastructure and major upgrades**

The NPS-I requires decision-makers to enable new infrastructure or major upgrades to existing infrastructure in all environments. If these activities are planned for locations, or could impact places and values, that are protected under section 6 of the RMA, this policy should be considered together with other relevant national direction, as well as regional and local plans. Otherwise, the adverse effects of these activities must, where practicable, be avoided, remedied or mitigated as required by the RMA.

## **Policy 10: Planning for and managing the interface and compatibility of infrastructure with other activities**

Planning rules need to make sure that existing and future infrastructure – like roads, pipes and power lines – can work well alongside other activities in the area. Decision-makers are required to manage the interface between infrastructure and other activities to ensure:

- infrastructure and other activities are as compatible as practicable
- the operation, maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure is not compromised by the adverse effects of other activities, with the result that infrastructure can keep running safely and efficiently, whether it's being maintained or upgraded, without being negatively affected by other nearby activities
- the co-location of compatible infrastructure, while recognising that some types of infrastructure are not compatible.

Decision-makers also need to:

- engage with infrastructure providers to understand what infrastructure is already there and what their long-term plans are
- identify appropriate methods to protect infrastructure from the adverse effects of new or more intense activities or incompatible activities
- apply a range of methods to manage the interface and compatibility between activities.

## **Policy 11: Assessing and managing the interface between infrastructure and other activities**

The NPS-I requires that, when planning new infrastructure or changes to existing infrastructure, decision-makers recognise:

- noise, vibration, dust and visual impacts are all typical effects with infrastructure projects, and should be managed appropriately
- amenity values can change, and changes can be necessary to achieve well-functioning urban and rural environments
- it is the responsibility of the new activity (including new infrastructure) to manage adverse effects, while allowing flexibility for specific circumstances.

## Alignment with other national direction

The NPS-I aligns with other national policy statements (eg, for electricity networks and renewable electricity generation) but will not override protections for values of national importance under the RMA. No national policy statement overrides another; all relevant statements must be considered in the decision-making process.

## Implementation considerations

### Immediate steps

Once the NPS-I comes into force, decision-makers must apply it when making decisions under the RMA.

This policy statement is applicable to all individuals and entities exercising powers and functions under the RMA. The objectives and policies are intended to guide decision-makers on resource consent applications, designations, heritage orders, water conservation orders and other relevant powers under the RMA. They also offer guidance for local authorities in plan-making.

Due to the RMA ‘Plan Stop’ amendments passed in August 2025, plans and policy statements will not be updated to give effect to the NPS-I until the new planning system is in effect (unless a relevant exemption applies).

### Transition to the new planning system

All existing national direction under the RMA will be reassessed and restructured to ensure it aligns with the goals and framework of the new planning system that will be established by the Planning and Natural Environment Bills.

The policy intent of the changes to national direction under the existing RMA will be transferred to the new system as appropriate.

## For further information

For more information, see the Ministry for the Environment website.

Ministry for the Environment. [National Policy Statement for Infrastructure](#).