



Preparing or amending national direction under the Resource Management Act 1991

Update following the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 that came into force on 25 October 2024

The Government has streamlined the process to prepare or amend national direction under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Context

National direction describes all national resource management policy, rules and standards set by central government to support local decision-making under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). National direction includes national policy statements, national environmental standards, national planning standards, and regulations made under section 360¹ of the RMA.

The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 (the Amendment Act) streamlined and simplified the process to prepare or amend national direction by:

- removing the board of inquiry (BOI) process for inquiring into and reporting on national direction
- making it easier to make simple updates to existing national direction
- removing evaluation report requirements for national direction.

The Amendment Act also introduced a minimum period of 20 working days for submissions on national direction proposals.

Removal of the BOI process

The Amendment Act repealed sections 47 to 51 of the RMA,² removing the BOI process for inquiring and reporting on national direction proposals. This change means all national direction will be prepared and amended using the Ministry- and Minister-led process under section 46A of the RMA, which still requires:

- notice of the proposed national direction and reasons why the Minister considers the proposed national direction to be consistent with the purpose of the RMA to the public and to iwi authorities

¹ Regulations.

² Various provisions for the BOI process.

- consideration of submissions
- consideration of Part 2 matters when preparing a report and recommendations on submissions.

Making it easier to make simple updates to existing national direction

The Amendment Act amended section 44(3)³ of the RMA to clarify and expand the circumstances where minor updates to national direction can be made without a consultation and submission process.

The amendment also introduced requirements for the Minister to:

- consider the appropriateness of using the full section 46A process before deciding to make a minor update
- publish reasons for making a minor update on a public internet site.

Removing evaluation report requirements for national direction

The Amendment Act amended sections 32 and 32AA of the RMA,⁴ to remove evaluation report requirements for national direction proposals.

It did not make any changes to evaluation requirements for local authority plans and policy statements.

New 20-working-day minimum period for submissions

The Amendment Act amended section 46A(4)(b)⁵ of the RMA to introduce a minimum 20-working-day submission period for national direction proposals.

Resources

For more information on national direction, see Ministry for the Environment: [National direction](#).

For more information, including background information, on the Amendment Act, see Ministry for the Environment: [Resource Management \(Freshwater and Other Matters\) Amendment Act 2024](#).

To view the Amendment Act, see New Zealand Legislation: [Resource Management \(Freshwater and Other Matters\) Amendment Act 2024](#).

³ Restriction on power to make national environmental standards.

⁴ Requirements for preparing, undertaking and publishing evaluation reports and further evaluations.

⁵ Process for preparing national environmental standards and national policy statements.

