

In confidence

Office of the Minister for Minister for the Environment

ENV - Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee

Proposed new waste strategy: final approval

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet approval for the new waste strategy, *Getting Rid of Waste for a Circular Aotearoa New Zealand*.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 The proposals in this Cabinet paper relate to:
 - 2.1 Labour's 2020 Election Manifesto commitment to prevent, reduce, and recycle waste consistent with a zero-waste approach
 - 2.2 the cooperation agreement between the Labour and Green Parties, in particular the commitment to take action to minimise waste and problem plastics
 - 2.3 implementation of the circular economy and waste-related commitments in the Emissions Reduction Plan.
- 3 The Prime Minister identified this strategy as a priority for 2022.

Executive Summary

- 4 Public consultation on proposals for the content of a new waste strategy took place in late 2021. It showed strong support for change based on a circular economy vision.
- 5 The proposed strategy includes a vision of New Zealand becoming a low emissions, low waste society built upon a circular economy by 2050 (see paragraph 18). It sets out three broad phases to get there. The strategy sets goals and targets for the first phase (see paragraph 20), so that by 2030 our enabling systems work well and behaviour is changing.
- 6 The intention is that the strategy will be supported by a series of more detailed Action and Investment Plans (AIP), setting out the priorities for the sector across the next five years. These will be developed collaboratively with territorial authorities and waste sector organisations. The first AIP will be developed in 2023.

Background

- 7 The Waste Reduction Work Programme published in 2021 set out the foundations needed for a transformed system. The main components are:

- 7.1 a new long-term waste strategy¹ (this paper)
 - 7.2 new legislation on waste, to replace the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 (WMA) and the Litter Act 1979 (the Litter Act) (final policy proposals due to Cabinet shortly)
 - 7.3 the Emissions Reduction Plan waste chapters (published May 2022)
 - 7.4 a national data programme (ongoing).
- 8 Cabinet approved a consultation document with proposals for a new waste strategy and legislation in August 2021 [CAB-21-MIN-0402]. Consultation ran from 15 October to 10 December 2021. We received 628 substantive submissions and 1862 template submissions, as well as direct feedback during various webinars and workshops.
- 9 The overall response confirmed strong support for progressing the initiatives outlined, including:
- 9.1 the need to act and address New Zealand's very high levels of waste
 - 9.2 the need for a national strategy taking a broad and long-term view to set the direction for change
 - 9.3 circular economy is the correct goal
 - 9.4 the importance of education to enable a circular economy culture as a normal way of life
 - 9.5 solutions that are equitable and fair, with people being supported at a local level.
- 10 Officials have revised the strategy proposals in light of the feedback received, further analysis, the evolving work programme on waste and related issues (eg, emissions reduction and energy), as well as emerging issues (eg, waste to energy).
- 11 Two previous waste strategies have been published, in 2002 and 2010. Much has changed since 2010, particularly in our understanding of how to better use, manage and dispose of materials.
- 12 The waste management sector has been calling for some time for the Government to set a clear long-term direction for waste management in New Zealand. There is widespread agreement that sustained action is needed to create change, but also concern that it should be coordinated so that all the different parts of the system head in the same direction.

Current and future role of the strategy

- 13 Although the WMA does not currently require there to be a strategy, if there is one it has some statutory force.
- 13.1 Section 44 states that when a territorial authority is preparing, amending or revoking a waste management and minimisation plan (WMMP), it must "have

¹ A separate workstream on a long-term waste infrastructure plan has now been merged with the strategy and the supporting Action & Investment Plan that will follow.

regard to the New Zealand Waste Strategy” or any equivalent government policy.

- 13.2 under section 48 the government can direct a territorial authority to change its WMMP to help achieve the waste strategy.²
- 14 The proposals for new waste legislation coming to Cabinet shortly include requiring the Minister to publish a strategy at least every 10 years and giving it a much stronger role in guiding central and local government planning, activities and investment. If these proposals proceed, the strategy will become more legally and practically important over time.
- 15 The waste strategy has strong links to several other government strategies and plans. It:
- 15.1 builds on the policy commitments in the waste chapters of the Emissions Reduction Plan
- 15.2 provides a strong basis for the work to come on the circular and bioeconomy strategy, which was a separate ERP commitment
- 15.3 aligns with the steps proposed in the Infrastructure Commission’s *New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy*.
- 16 The intention is that the strategy will be supported by a series of more detailed AIPs, setting out the priorities for the sector across the next five years. These will be developed collaboratively with territorial authorities and waste sector organisations. The first AIP will be developed in 2023.
- 17 The WMMPs produced by territorial authorities would need to align with both the strategy and any supporting AIP under the proposals for new legislation.

² The proposals to require standardised kerbside recycling collections would use the section 48 power for the first time to implement some aspects of that reform. The new strategy text has been prepared to support that step, if Cabinet approves those proposals.

Summary of the proposed content

18 The strategy looks out to 2050, with the following vision and guiding principles:

Our vision for 2050

By 2050, Aotearoa New Zealand is a low emissions, low waste society, built upon a circular economy.

We cherish our inseparable connection with the natural environment, and look after the planet's finite resources with care and responsibility.

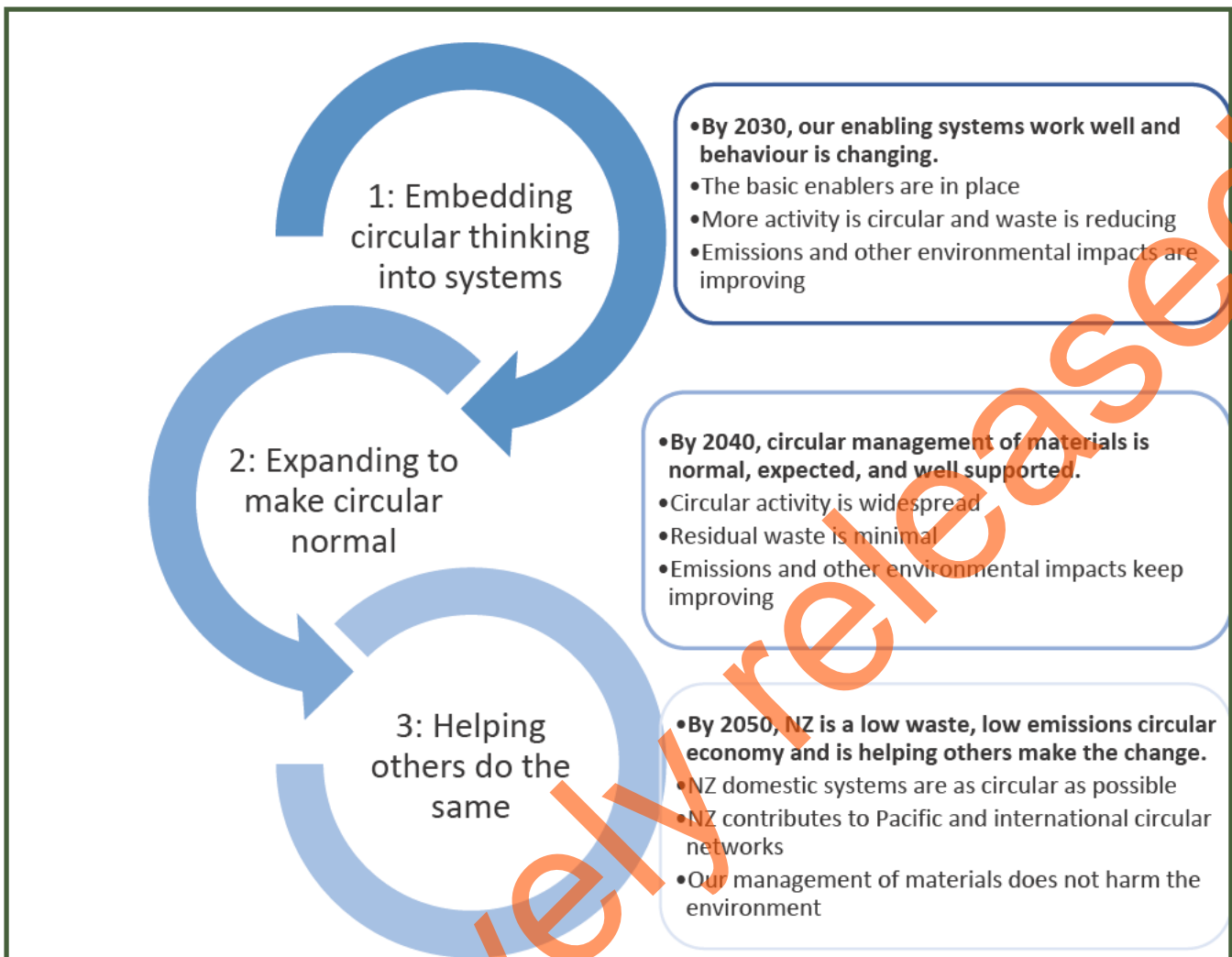
Guiding principles

1. Take responsibility for how we make, use, manage and dispose of things.
2. Apply the waste hierarchy preferences to how we manage materials.
3. Protect and regenerate the natural environment and its systems.
4. Deliver equitable and inclusive outcomes.
5. Ensure our systems for using, managing and disposing of materials are financially sustainable.
6. Recognise connections between systems, places and generations.

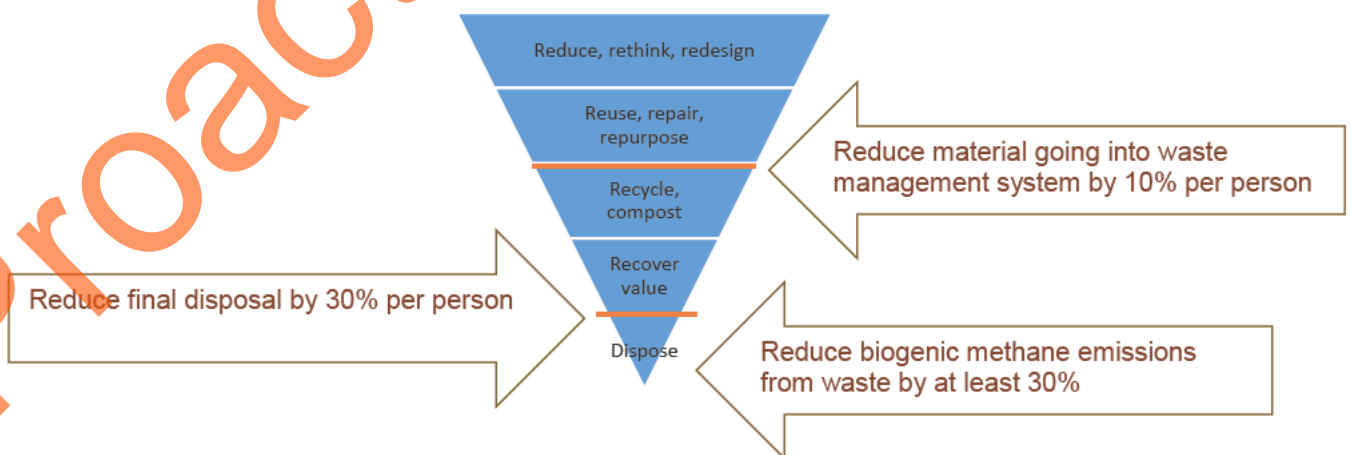
19 There is very broad agreement on reducing waste in every society, including from a te ao Māori perspective. Agreed circular economy principles include:

- 19.1 thinking about connections across systems and the consequences of our actions
- 19.2 recognising the value in natural resources and maximise our use of them.
- 19.3 sharing responsibility to take care.

20 For how we get there, the strategy sets out three broad phases:



21 For phase 1, the strategy sets three high level targets on critical aspects for 2030, illustrated here against the waste hierarchy:



22 There are eight goals for phase 1, alongside those targets. Each goal is supported by identified priorities for action.

By 2030, our enabling systems work well and behaviour is changing

The basic enablers are in place	1. The strategic planning, regulatory, investment and engagement systems are in place and operating to drive and support change
	2. We have a comprehensive national network of facilities supporting the collection and circular management of products and materials
	3. We all take responsibility for how we produce, manage and dispose of things, and are accountable for our actions and their consequences
More activity is circular and waste is reducing	4. We are using fewer products and materials, for longer, through increased durability, repair, reuse, sharing and repurposing
	5. Resource recovery systems are operating effectively for core materials and across all regions
	6. We look for ways to recover any remaining value from residual waste, sustainably and without increasing emissions, before final disposal
Emissions and other environmental impacts are improving	7. Emissions from waste are reducing in line with domestic and international commitments
	8. Contaminated land is sustainably managed and remediated to reduce waste, emissions and enhance the environment

23 The waste management industry has raised a concern about the need for strategic clarity – in particular over whether reduction of waste or of emissions should take priority. The primary focus of the waste strategy is on the specific challenge of reducing New Zealand’s waste volumes, by changing how we produce and manage both solid and gaseous waste streams, including greenhouse gas emissions. Reduced waste reduces the depletion of limited resources, including the limited capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gas emissions. The Strategy is based on circular economy principles, which support the reduction of all forms of waste, including harmful emissions. Specific to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the strategy includes:

23.1 a focus on emissions reduction across the life cycle of products and materials, under the principle on protecting and regenerating the environment, and

23.2 a specific goal on reducing emissions from waste (goal 7).

Implementation

24 Turning the strategy into action will largely be governed by the AIP process described in paragraph 16. These plans will spell out:

- 24.1 the immediate priorities for the next five year period, looking across a mix of geographical areas, communities, material streams, and risks
 - 24.2 the mix of regulatory, investment, behaviour change, infrastructure, system change and other actions planned to address those priorities
 - 24.3 how those various actions will need to be sequenced to fit together
 - 24.4 who needs to do what.
- 25 There are some aspects of the strategy that the Ministry can start to put into effect immediately, subject to resourcing. These include:
- 25.1 promotional activity to socialise the strategy and build engagement
 - 25.2 completion or continuation of the projects covered by the current Waste Reduction Work Programme, which are built into the strategy
 - 25.3 building the Ministry's capacity for sustained engagement and partnerships with stakeholders
 - 25.4 developing an approach to the long-term behaviour change programme that the strategy commits to, drawing on the behaviour change work recently started to support emissions-related waste reduction goals.

Financial Implications

- 26 There are no direct financial implications from release of strategy itself. However, the strategy commits the Government to substantial ongoing work. Some aspects of the strategy will be funded by the waste levy, particularly once proposed new waste legislation adjusts the controls on what it can be used for. Resourcing for other individual programmes under the strategy will be managed through either baseline or normal budget processes.

Legislative Implications

- 27 Some of the content of the strategy relies on new waste legislation being enacted.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement; Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 28 A strategy of this kind does not require a regulatory impact statement. The new strategy itself has no direct climate impact. The need to address greenhouse gas emissions underpins much of the strategy content.

Population Implications

- 29 I do not consider there are substantial risks of negative population impacts. Rather, many of the initiatives covered by the strategy aim to address the current inequalities in access to waste management services and alternatives to landfill. To maintain this focus, the proposed strategy includes the need to deliver equitable and inclusive outcomes as a guiding principle, with the following supporting points:

- 29.1 recognise the unique perspectives, needs and approaches facing different local communities, businesses, hapū/iwi and whānau
- 29.2 ensure the costs and benefits of change are distributed equitably between communities and across generations
- 29.3 develop and invest to create opportunities and jobs in local and regional communities.

Human Rights

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

Consultation

- 31 The following departments and agencies have been consulted: Treasury, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Environment Protection Authority, Te Arawhiti, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Health, Department of Corrections, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Social Development, NZ Customs Service. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.
- 32 The Ministry has also tested aspects of these proposals with the Territorial Authority Officers forum of WasteMINZ.

Communications

- 33 My office will discuss the timing and arrangements for release with the Office of the Prime Minister.

Proactive Release

- 34 I propose to release this Cabinet paper following the release of the strategy itself.

Recommendations

The Minister for the Environment recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that consultation on draft proposals for a new waste strategy in late 2021 showed strong support for the suggested level of ambition and overall approach;
- 2 **approve** the release of the new waste strategy, *Getting Rid of Waste for a Circular Aotearoa New Zealand*, subject to final editing;
- 3 **authorise** the Minister for the Environment to approve changes to the final text of the strategy to take account of any Cabinet decisions on related waste policy papers before the strategy is released;
- 4 **note** that the Minister for the Environment will finalise arrangements for the launch of the strategy in consultation with the Office of the Prime Minister.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment

Proactively released

Appendix

Proposed text of final waste strategy, *Getting Rid of Waste for a Circular Aotearoa New Zealand* (in a separate document).

Proactively released