

Resource management reform

An overview

Why we're reforming the resource management system

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is Aotearoa New Zealand's main law governing how we use our natural and built resources. Now more than 30 years old, the RMA is not delivering for the environment or for development, and is no longer fit to help us respond to emerging issues, such as adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The Government is reforming the resource management system to create one that's more certain and efficient – a system that supports development within environmental limits and is required to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

At its heart is te Oranga o te Taiao – a concept drawn from te ao Māori, and an intergenerational ethic that speaks to the health and wellbeing of the natural environment, and the essential relationship between a healthy environment and its capacity to sustain all life.

Proposed laws

The Government announced in February 2021 that the RMA would be repealed and replaced with three new Acts: the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) and the Climate Adaptation Act (CAA). The SP Bill and the NBE Bill are being introduced to Parliament in 2022. The CA Bill is expected to be introduced in 2023.

The Spatial Planning Act

- The SPA will provide for long term, coordinated regional planning.
- Regions will be required to provide 30-year regional spatial strategies to guide major strategic decisions about land use and environmental protection.
- The SPA will link with other legislation important to natural and built environments, including the Local Government Act 2002, and the Land Transport Management Act 2003.

The Natural and Built Environment Act

- The NBA will set out the rules for land use and resource allocation in a region.
- Regions will be required to provide a natural and built environment plan (NBE plan), which will replace more than 100 district and regional plans in the current system. It will focus on positive outcomes for both our natural and built environments.
- The NBA will also provide a National Planning Framework that will draw together more than 20 current pieces of national direction. This will provide consistency and mean a stronger and more active role in the new system for central government.

The Climate Adaptation Act

- The CAA will support Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the effects of climate change.
- It will address the complex legal and technical issues associated with managed retreat and with funding and financing adaptation.

Objectives of reform

Reform of the resource management system is guided by five key objectives.

1. *Protect and where necessary restore the natural environment, including its capacity to provide for the wellbeing of present and future generations.*

The new system will switch from the current focus on managing negative effects of development to a focus on promoting positive outcomes for the built and natural environments. The NBA and National Planning Framework will set limits and targets to protect the environment and peoples' health, provide guidance on resolving conflicts and provide strategic direction.

2. *Better enable development within environmental biophysical limits including a significant improvement in housing supply, affordability and choice, and timely provision of appropriate infrastructure, including social infrastructure.*

Regional spatial strategies will identify areas where development is needed over at least the next 30 years.

The National Planning Framework will ensure that regional spatial strategies plan for additional infrastructure capacity within environmental limits and will provide good-practice planning and technical standards.

The policy intent of the [Medium Density Residential Standards](#) will be carried over into the new legislation.

3. *Give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to provide greater recognition of te ao Māori, including mātauranga Māori.*

Māori will have a more effective role at local, regional and national levels. This includes Māori representatives on the regional planning committees developing regional spatial strategies and NBE plans, and a new national Māori entity to monitor the performance of the new system against the principles of Te Tiriti.

4. *Better prepare for adapting to climate change and risks from natural hazards as well as mitigating the emissions that contribute to climate change.*

Regions will need to take climate change into account in their planning, by both reducing emissions and considering how they need to adapt to the impacts of climate changes. Regions will also need to plan for natural hazards, risks and resilience.

5. *Improve system efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce complexity, while retaining appropriate local democratic input.*

The future resource management system will better enable development through strong national direction, for example on infrastructure and housing. Regional spatial strategies will identify where development is needed and help avoid local conflicts. The number of resource consents currently required under the RMA will reduce.

More about resource management reform

Visit the [resource management system reform pages](#) on the Ministry for the Environment's website for more information, including more factsheets:

[The Spatial Planning Act](#)

[Development, infrastructure and efficiency](#)

[Protecting the environment](#)

[A more effective role for Māori](#)

[Roles and decision-making in the future system](#)

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Published in November 2022 by the
Ministry for the Environment – Manatū Mō Te Taiao
Publication number: INFO 1111



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government