

# Resource management reform: the Natural and Built Environment Act

One of three new laws that will replace the  
Resource Management Act 1991

## 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The Government announced in February 2021 that the RMA would be repealed and replaced with three new Acts: the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) and the Climate Adaptation Act (CAA).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.

This information sheet focuses on the proposed Natural and Built Environment Act.

# Natural and Built Environment Act

The proposed NBA will become the core piece of legislation governing land use and environmental regulation in Aotearoa. It will work with the SPA and CAA to create a stronger environmental management system that improves how we plan, build and develop, and how we protect and preserve our environment and natural systems.

The NBA will take over important functions from the RMA, including national direction and consenting processes. The focus will shift from managing the effects of an activity to promoting positive outcomes, while also managing adverse effects.

The NBA's purpose includes a strengthened Te Tiriti clause, requiring that all people exercising functions and powers under the Act must "give effect" to the principles of Te Tiriti. This updates the RMA's current requirement to "take into account" Te Tiriti principles.

## National Planning Framework

The NBA proposes a system of outcomes, limits and targets set through a National Planning Framework. The National Planning Framework will coordinate and replace more than 20 current pieces of national direction. It will guide the future system and provide stronger direction for regional planning.

### Outcomes, limits and targets in the National Planning Framework

Outcomes will include:

- our air, soil, estuaries and coastal areas being protected, restored or enhanced
- the reduction of greenhouse gases
- the development of well-functioning, climate-resilient urban areas that improve our quality of life.

Plans and consents will be required to show how outcomes will be achieved.

Limits will set the "bottom lines" for environmental degradation that development cannot breach. They will ensure things don't get any worse, and will protect environmental and human health.

Targets will express where we want to get to, and will protect ecological integrity and human health.

## Natural and built environment plans

The NBA will require each region to develop a natural and built environment plan (NBE plan), setting out rules for land use and resource allocation. NBE plans will replace more than a hundred district and regional plans under the current system, resolving the issue of overlapping boundaries and rules.

NBE plans will be developed by a regional planning committee with representatives from local authorities and local hapū, iwi and Māori, with community engagement and input. NBE plans will be informed by the National Planning Framework and the long-term regional spatial strategies.

More activities will be permitted in NBE plans, reducing the need for consents. Big decisions and trade-offs made at this stage will reduce the cost and delays of consent processes.

NBE plans and consents will be required to show how they will achieve the targets and outcomes in the National Planning Framework.

The Natural and Built Environment Act will require plan makers to engage effectively and early with mana whenua, as well as other interested parties. An independent hearing panel will hear submissions on a draft NBE plan, ensuring a robust and independent process.

Through the creation of the National Planning Framework and NBE plans, the Natural and Built Environment Act will introduce stronger national direction and consistency for users of the resource management system, clearer requirements for consenting, and a more active role for central government around how we use, protect and manage our natural and built environments.

## 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:

[Overview of resource management reform](#)

[The Spatial Planning Act](#)

[Development and infrastructure](#)

[Protecting the environment](#)

[A more effective role for Māori](#)

[Roles and responsibilities](#)

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