

Resource management reform

Roles and decision-making in the future system

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The Government announced in February 2021 that the RMA would be repealed and replaced with three new Acts: the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) and the Climate Adaptation Act (CAA).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 provides an overview of how the proposed NBA and the SPA will work together, and the roles of different parties.

Natural and Built Environment Act

The proposed NBA will take over the functions of the RMA, including national direction, planning and consents.

Each region will be required to develop a Natural and Built Environment Plan (NBE plan) covering both land use and resource allocation. NBE plans will replace more than 100 district and regional plans under the RMA.

The NBA will also provide a National Planning Framework that will consolidate and clarify more than 20 existing pieces of national direction. The National Planning Framework will specify desired outcomes for our built and natural environments, set explicit limits for environmental degradation that development cannot breach, and set targets to protect environmental and human health.

Spatial Planning Act

The proposed SPA will provide for spatial planning across all regions in Aotearoa. This will fill a gap in the current legislation, and allow for long-term regional direction and planning.

The proposed SPA will require each region to produce a regional spatial strategy that sets the regional direction for at least the next 30 years. The regional spatial strategy will identify opportunities, challenges, areas to be protected and areas suitable for development. It will be informed by the outcomes, limits and targets in the National Planning Framework.

Regional planning committees

The NBE plan and regional spatial strategy for each region will be developed by a regional planning committee with members from local government and local hapū, iwi and Māori. Central government will have a representative on the regional planning committee developing the regional spatial strategy.

The overall size and membership of the committee will be determined by local authorities and Māori in the region. The committee will be able to determine its own chairing and sub-chairing arrangements and will be required to reach decisions by consensus.

Roles in the new resource management system

Central government

Central government will provide oversight of the future system, along with independent entities like the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, the Environmental Protection Authority and the new national Māori entity. This central government oversight will involve:

- membership on regional planning committees during regional spatial strategy development
- taking a stronger and more active role through the National Planning Framework to provide integrated national direction
- a statutory obligation to respond to national reports on the state of the environment and on how the system is working.

Local government

Local government will have an important responsibility for ensuring local voices are represented. Key responsibilities for local government include:

- membership on all regional planning committees
- implementing and administering the regional spatial strategy and NBE Plan
- providing resource and expertise during regional spatial strategy and NBE plan development
- producing Statements of Community Outcomes and Statements of Regional Environmental Outcomes to guide regional plan-making
- consenting, compliance monitoring and enforcement roles.

Māori

Māori will have effective decision-making roles in the future system. This will include:

- membership on all regional planning committees
- providing input and expertise during regional spatial strategy and NBE plan development
- providing technical advice, such as cultural impact assessments
- continuing their existing roles and functions established through Tiriti settlements, along with Mana Whakahono ā Rohe processes, joint management agreements and transfers of powers.

The reforms also introduce a new engagement agreement tool, which will more easily allow iwi, hapū and other Māori groups to agree with regional planning committees on how they will be engaged in plan development.

People and communities

The public will have early and meaningful opportunities to provide their views on how the environment should be managed. This includes:

- early and better public participation during policy development
- ensuring all types of feedback received have weight throughout the plan-development process
- the opportunity to make submissions and appear at hearings into NBE plans.

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](#)
- [The Natural and Built Environment Act](#)
- [Development and infrastructure](#)
- [Protecting the environment](#)
- [A more effective role for Māori](#)

Disclaimer

The information in this publication is, according to the Ministry for the Environment's best efforts, accurate at the time of publication. The Ministry will make every reasonable effort to keep it current and accurate. However, users of this publication are advised that:

- The information does not alter the laws of New Zealand, other official guidelines, or requirements.
- It does not constitute legal advice, and users should take specific advice from qualified professionals before taking any action based on information in this publication.
- The Ministry does not accept any responsibility or liability whatsoever whether in contract, tort, equity, or otherwise for any action taken as a result of reading, or reliance placed on this publication because of having read any part, or all, of the information in this publication or for any error, or inadequacy, deficiency, flaw in, or omission from the information in this publication.
- All references to websites, organisations or people not within the Ministry are for convenience only and should not be taken as endorsement of those websites or information contained in those websites nor of organisations or people referred to.

