

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The Government announced in February 2021 that the RMA would be repealed and replaced with three new Acts: the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) and the Climate Adaptation Act (CAA).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

Why we need a Spatial Planning Act

Spatial planning is a process of long-term strategy making and coordination. It involves identifying the big issues and opportunities facing a region, and developing a strategy to respond to them. The current resource management system lacks a formal, consistent framework for long-term, strategic spatial planning.

Mapping changes spatially helps represent the strategy in a clear and understandable way. In spatial planning, the process is as important as the final output because it lays a foundation for community consensus.

What the Spatial Planning Act will do

The SPA will ensure better, more strategic planning for how a region will grow, adapt and change over time, and how land, infrastructure and other resources will be used to promote the wellbeing of people, the environment and the economy.

It will introduce for the first time a consistent, formal framework for spatial planning in Aotearoa New Zealand. It will provide certainty and enable change and adaptation in regions, with positive outcomes for the environment, community wellbeing and resilience.

The SPA's core function will be to mandate the use of spatial planning, requiring central government, local government and Māori to work together to develop long-term regional spatial strategies that set regional direction for at least the next 30 years.

Regional spatial strategies

Regional spatial strategies will bring together a range of important factors – including land-use planning, environmental regulation, infrastructure provision and responses to climate change – that sit under different legislative functions. These include the proposed Natural and Built Environment Act, Local Government Act 2002, Land Transport Management Act 2003 and Climate Change Response Act 2002.

Regional spatial strategies will set spatial outcomes for how a particular geographic area will grow, adapt and change over time, and how land, infrastructure and other resources will be used and integrated to promote wellbeing.

Regional spatial strategies will be developed by regional planning committees with members from local government, local hapū, iwi and Māori, and central government, with community involvement and engagement.

Resource management reform will provide consistent national direction, environmental limits and targets, and a recognition of the value and need for well-planned infrastructure.

The Spatial Planning Act will enable planning for transformative long-term improvements.

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

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