



# Strategic intentions He takunetanga rautaki 2023–2027



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

Presented to the House of Representatives pursuant  
to section 39 of the Public Finance Act 1989

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# Ngā tauāki haepapa Statements of responsibility

## Responsible Minister's statement

I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by the Ministry for the Environment is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.



**Hon David Parker**  
Minister for the Environment

8 February 2023

## Secretary for the Environment's statement

The Ministry for the Environment – Te Manatū Mō Te Taiao must publish its strategic intentions at least every three years as part of a transparent, accountable public service. These intentions outline how we plan to give effect to government priorities and our stewardship role, and how our performance can be measured. They also describe the way we will go about our work, and how we are working to improve our capabilities.

In signing this document, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on strategic intentions for the Ministry. This information has been prepared in accordance with sections 38 and 40 of the Public Finance Act 1989.



**Vicky Robertson**  
Secretary for the Environment

1 February 2023

# He kupu nā te Tumu Whakarae mō te Taiao Message from the Secretary for the Environment

*Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi  
As an old net withers, another is made*



## **We're on the cusp of a transformative change.**

Late last year legislation was introduced to Parliament to establish a new environmental management system for Aotearoa New Zealand. By the end of 2023 the Natural and Built Environment Bill and the Spatial Planning Bill are expected to pass into law.

It's a new system for a different Aotearoa. Since the Resource Management Act (RMA) was passed in 1991, our country has changed. We have a larger economy and population, land use is more intensive in urban and rural areas, and we are increasingly subject to the pressures of climate change.

The new laws will reflect aspiration and forward thinking. Where the RMA focuses on mitigating effects of human activity on the land, the new system will zero in on the outcomes the people of Aotearoa want to see. Rather than wear and tear, we'll be focused on the road ahead.



To help Aotearoa make the transition, the Ministry is changing gear. In the next few years, most of our effort will go into supporting the implementation of the new system by enabling people to participate and fulfil their roles.

Alongside this work, we'll continue to modernise other aspects of environmental management. The Climate Adaptation Bill, the final part of the new planning system, will help Aotearoa respond to unavoidable changes in the climate. New, more comprehensive waste legislation is also planned. To accelerate change we will also continue to support the implementation of existing policies in areas like freshwater and climate.

Alongside these systemic shifts, New Zealanders will see a fresh approach to other environmental issues they are deeply passionate about, such as biodiversity, and how we care for our coasts. More broadly, the National Planning Framework – the consolidated set of national direction on environmental issues – will provide a new level of clarity and consistency to the way Aotearoa plans and builds.

At the same time, the Ministry itself will continue to adapt.

A number of reforms in recent years have introduced new, ongoing responsibilities for the Ministry, such as oversight of the Climate Change Commission, and development of the emissions reduction plan and national adaptation plan. The appropriations we oversee, including the Emissions Trading Scheme and the expanded Waste Levy, are now almost \$3 billion annually.

To be effective stewards, we're investing in people, knowledge, relationships and systems. Cultivating strengths in te ao Māori, and science and data, remain at the heart of our strategic framework. We're also committed to driving emissions and waste out of our operations, modelling new practices around managing climate-related risk, and equipping the wider public sector to become more sustainable.

Of course, it won't be easy. Dawn is breaking, and there's a full day's work ahead. But the foundations are laid. And we're better placed than ever to realise our purpose: A flourishing environment for every generation | He taiao tōnui mō ngā reanga katoa.

Nāku noa, nā



**Vicky Robertson**  
Secretary for the Environment

# Te Taiao o Aotearoa

## Aotearoa New Zealand's environment

The Ministry is focused on understanding and reporting on the health of Aotearoa New Zealand's environment. Our priority is continued improvement of Aotearoa New Zealand's ability to measure both environmental outcomes and how our monitoring system performs.

Our **environmental reporting series** highlights the range of environmental challenges Aotearoa is facing.

The climate is changing, with more extreme weather events, and rising temperatures and acidity of our oceans.



Use of agricultural land has intensified, and productive land is being lost to erosion, development and land fragmentation.



Freshwater resources are under pressure.



Pollution from Aotearoa New Zealand's activities is having an impact.



Ecosystems and biodiversity are under pressure.



- Levels of waste are unsustainable.
- Water quality has been degraded.
- Poor air quality is affecting people's health.

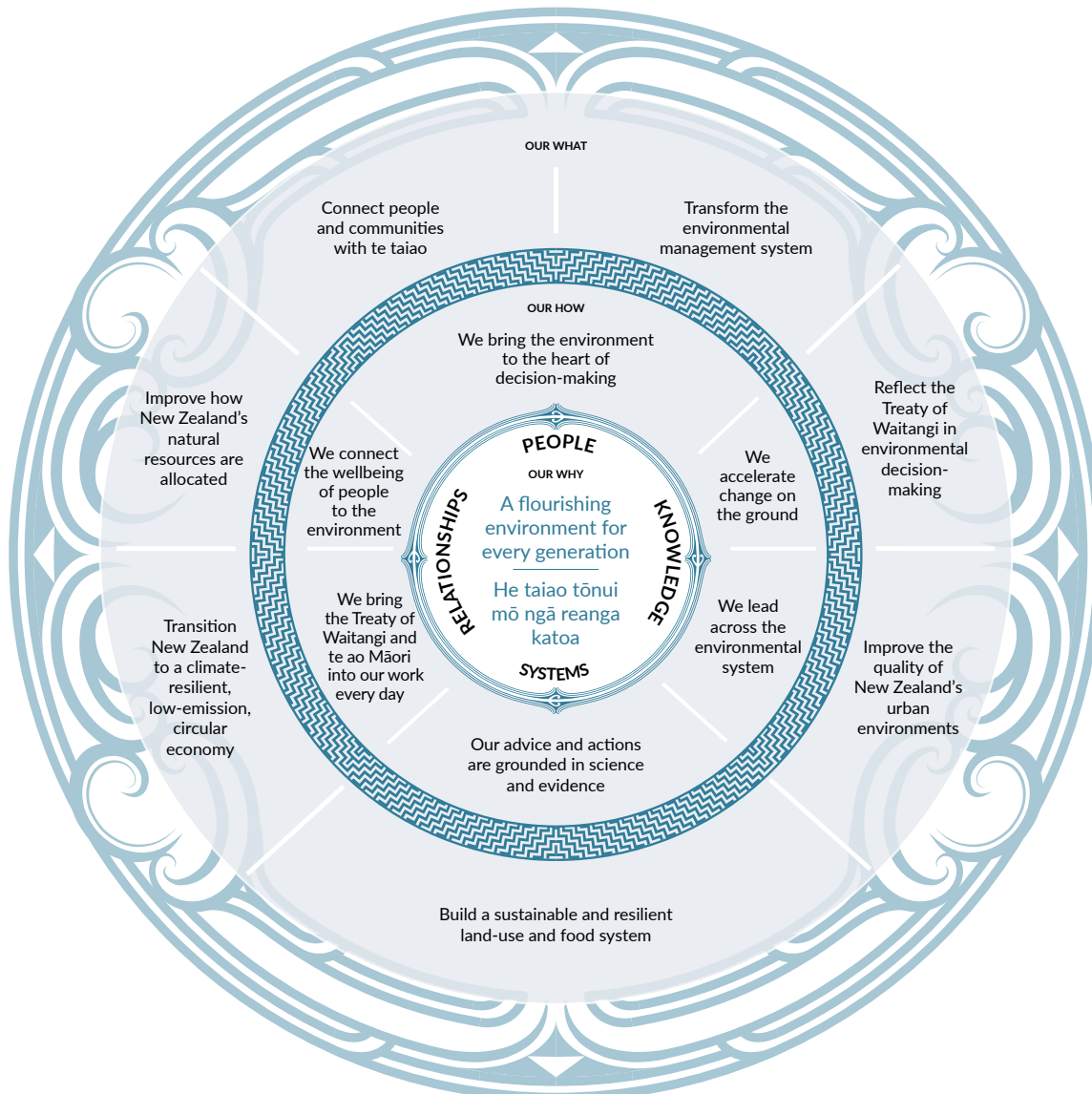
# Tō tātou rautaki pou tarāwaho

## Our strategic framework

Our strategic framework describes our why, how and what:

1. **Our why is our purpose:** A flourishing environment for every generation | He taiao tōnui mō ngā reanga katoa
2. **Our how is our operating principles:** how we will go about our mahi
3. **Our what is our strategic priorities:** the mahi we are doing.

This is supported by our organisational capabilities: the things that enable us to do our mahi – our people, knowledge, relationships and systems.







# Ā tātou haepapa Our why

The Ministry for the Environment was established under the Environment Act 1986 and is the Government's primary adviser on environmental matters. We are a public service agency, serving the government of the day.

Our Act requires us to think broadly as we develop our advice and to consider the intrinsic values of ecosystems, the value people place on the environment, the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi, the sustainability of natural and physical resources, and the needs of future generations.

We've wrapped this into a simple purpose statement for the Ministry:

**A flourishing environment for every generation |  
He taiao tōnuī mō ngā reanga katoa.**

# Our business activities

We deliver across seven business activities.

## Governance and leadership

The Ministry is part of the **Natural Resources Cluster** along with the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for Primary Industries. Meeting the Government's priorities for this cluster requires collective stewardship from all three agencies.

In our system stewardship role, we work closely with two interagency executive boards.

- The Strategic Planning Reform Board oversees the development and implementation of strategic planning legislation as part of wider resource management reform.
- The Climate Change Chief Executives Board, formed in July 2022, will monitor and report on the delivery of actions in the emissions reduction plan and national adaptation plan.

We are also the monitoring agency for the Environmental Protection Authority and the Climate Change Commission. We provide independent advice on the performance of these Crown entities and help Ministers with their responsibilities, such as the appointment of board members.

## Legislative and regulatory change

We work to deliver legislative and regulatory change by providing policy advice to the Government. This includes working with other agencies and organisations to understand the implications of proposed changes, so that legislation and regulations are fit for purpose.

## Partnerships and engagement

Through many partnerships we play a key role in meeting Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments. We also partner with central and local government, and local communities to accelerate change, support positive action, and improve environmental outcomes across the economy and society.

## Policy implementation

We are increasingly focused on supporting the implementation of government policies. This includes working at a local level with our Te Tiriti partners, local government, and communities. As well as ensuring policies are applied well, and have the desired effect, this work helps ensure our policy advice is well informed.

## Investment and funding

We oversee and provide administrative support for the Government's investment in the environment and to aid Aotearoa New Zealand's post COVID-19 economic recovery.

We are also increasing our investment in science and evidence to support informed policy advice and decision-making. This includes investment to improve data on the environment and our climate, and the use of mātauranga Māori.

## Environmental reporting

We track the impact of our way of life on the environment under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015. We work with Stats NZ to provide up-to-date environmental science, data and mātauranga Māori, supporting policy makers, businesses, community groups and individuals to make informed decisions.

## Organisational development

We invest in developing our people, functions and capabilities to ensure we deliver on the Government's work programme and meet future needs.





# Ā tātou kawenga Our how

These are our operating principles  
for how we will go about our mahi.



## We lead across the environmental system

We have a leadership role in managing the environment. In addition to our policy advisory role, government and stakeholders are calling for us to focus more on the whole environmental system's performance. In practice, this means working with central and local government, business, iwi/Māori, and communities to improve environmental outcomes.

## We bring the environment to the heart of decision-making

We help inform the decisions made by local and central government, and individuals. We focus on the intergenerational implications of decisions, so the environment can flourish. We do this through evidence-based policy advice, emphasising the intrinsic values of ecosystems, and through environmental reporting which informs people about the cumulative impact of the choices New Zealanders make.

## We bring the Treaty of Waitangi and te ao Māori into our work every day

We weave Māori perspectives and mātauranga Māori into our work, from policy advice, business practices and environmental reporting to building relationships with Māori entities and iwi through Tiriti settlement agreements.

## We connect the wellbeing of people to the environment

An important part of our work is making stronger connections between wellbeing and the quality of, and access to, the natural environment. We see this as a way to accelerate positive environmental change which enhances individual and community wellbeing.

## We accelerate change on the ground

The core of our work programme is effective implementation of government policy. In the years ahead, support for implementing the new resource management system will be a major focus for the Ministry. This builds on work to support the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package and other initiatives to accelerate change. This includes our work with others on Aotearoa New Zealand's response to climate change, the Jobs for Nature programme, and investment in waste minimisation and resource recovery.

We also coordinate and enhance efforts across the public sector to accelerate the adoption of sustainable principles for emissions reduction, and incorporation of environmental considerations into policy advice.

## Our advice and actions are grounded in science and evidence

As the Government's principal policy advisor on environmental matters, we champion evidence-based environmental science, including mātauranga Māori and social science, and environmental intelligence. We provide information to help guide decision-makers and create a foundation for change.

### Our sustainability

We aspire to lead the public service in operating sustainably and reducing emissions. Our **Sustainability Strategy July 2022 – June 2025** outlines how we will deliver on our long-term sustainability goals of operating within our baseline, minimising our environmental impact, and providing our people with what they need to flourish.

The strategy calls for us to be high-performing sustainability leaders who share best practice, support others, and are a strong voice for the environment.

We are also committed to understanding the actual and potential risks climate change poses to our operations, strategy and financial plans, and how we can use our **climate-related disclosures** to share our progress. We will work with stakeholders across Aotearoa to improve how we assess and manage climate-related risks and opportunities.



# Ā tātou mahi Our what

The following are our strategic priorities and describe our mahi. These priorities influence each other, contribute to the priorities for the Natural Resources Cluster, and help us work towards a flourishing environment for every generation.

# Transform the environmental management system

The Ministry is engaged in a comprehensive reform programme to modernise the environmental management system and the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) which sits at its heart.

The system includes the laws and institutions that influence our relationship with the environment. It accounts for everything from resource management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, to the way we build our towns and cities. In the broadest sense, the system includes anyone making decisions which affect the environment.

Since the Resource Management Review Panel released its report *New Directions for Resource Management in New Zealand* in June 2020, we have advised substantial changes to the resource management system. In the years ahead, a major focus for the Ministry will be supporting implementation of the new system.

Bills for two new Acts – the Spatial Planning Act and the Natural and Built Environment Act – were introduced to Parliament at the end of 2022. A third Bill – the Climate Adaptation Act – is expected to follow in 2023. This will seek to address the complex legal and technical issues of managed coastal retreat, and funding and financing climate change adaptation.

Nationally and regionally set environmental limits and targets will be given effect to in the Natural and Built Environment Act to prevent the ecological integrity of the natural environment from further degradation, and to protect human health. It is critical to have clear standards across all environmental domains: coastal water, estuaries, freshwater, air, soil and indigenous biodiversity.

The marine environment faces new and increasing pressures from activities at sea and on land. Environmental management reforms offer opportunities to restore and protect our marine environment, while allowing for sustainable development of the marine economy.

An interdepartmental executive board, the Strategic Planning Reform Board, was established in April 2021 to lead the policy development of the Spatial Planning Act, providing collective ownership and accountability for the Act. From July 2023, this board will be replaced by the Spatial Planning Board to govern the implementation of the Spatial Planning Act, and to have ongoing stewardship, oversight, and monitoring responsibility for the Act.

The National Planning Framework will support these new Acts. It will combine existing and new national direction to provide cohesive guidance and support for decision-makers tasked with reconciling competing environmental issues.

We will be working closely with Tiriti partners, local government, and communities to transition to, and implement the new system. This is an opportunity to deliver a step change in the way Aotearoa plans and manages the environment. The reforms will make the system more efficient, through earlier, more cohesive and consolidated strategic spatial plans across each region. Decisions at each level are expected to be better supported by the planning hierarchy, with more permitted activities, less re-litigation of planning issues, and fewer consents required.



<b>Activity</b>				
<b>1. Develop and transition to the new planning and environmental management legislation</b>	<b>2. Develop and maintain the national direction system for the Resource Management Act, and the Natural and Built Environment Act</b>	<b>3. Support efficient and effective operation of the resource management system</b>	<b>4. Provide a system perspective on oceans policy</b>	<b>5. Strengthen the environmental monitoring and reporting system to report on environmental change and outcomes</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>				
Protect and restore our environment and its capacity to provide for future generations  Enable better development within biophysical environmental limits and targets	Greater clarity and certainty about Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental policy settings  Environmental decision-making is more consistent across central and local government	The resource management system operates efficiently and effectively	Ocean and coastal ecosystems are healthy and resilient	Advice, decisions and actions are grounded in science and evidence
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>				
An effective transition to the Spatial Planning and Natural and Built Environment Acts	RMA national direction continues to be provided  The National Planning Framework is established	Maintain and improve the performance of the operational resource management system  Improve stewardship of the resource management system across policy domains, practices and implementation	Establish an integrated marine spatial planning framework that enables the protection and use of marine space and resources	Set the foundations needed to drive consistent, fit-for-purpose national-level data and information, and to support implementation by central and local government
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>				
Planning and environmental legislation is put into effect  The first three regions are supported for the development of regional spatial strategies and national and built environment plans	The RMA national direction work programme (including freshwater, drinking water, biodiversity, highly productive land, and urban development) is delivered as agreed with Ministers  The National Planning Framework work programme is delivered as agreed with Ministers	Central and local government can access technical support and capacity to support planning and decision-making, including the RMA and the transition to the new resource management system	Spatial planning integrates the land/sea interface, accounts for climate change, and incorporates a te ao Māori view  The marine spatial planning framework supports the development of scientific evidence and mātauranga Māori	Establish the attributes required to understand Aotearoa New Zealand's environment and limits and targets  Identify future system data architecture for improved management of and access to environmental information and data  Develop a blueprint design of a national monitoring network to collect environmental information and data

# Reflect the Treaty of Waitangi in environmental decision-making

As the lead public agency working on environmental policy, the Ministry is responsible for ensuring Māori perspectives, rights and interests are incorporated in the policy development process and decision-making.

We are committed to upholding the Crown-Māori Treaty partnership by working alongside iwi, hapū and Māori for positive environmental outcomes. Bringing te ao Māori – the Māori worldview – into our work enables us to deliver a holistic view, which acknowledges among other things, the contribution a healthy environment brings to the wellbeing of all people in Aotearoa.

Central to this work is the knowledge that Māori have rights, as Treaty partners and tangata whenua, to be involved in environmental policy and decision-making.

The Crown has made commitments as part of Treaty settlements, which includes arrangements across the country where we, iwi and hapū, and local government have agreed to work together to improve environmental outcomes.

A key driver of the review of the Resource Management Act was to ensure Māori have an effective role in the environmental management system and that the system is consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi. Under the Natural and Built Environment Bill we will advise on how the exercise of Ministerial powers will achieve the requirements of this legislation, including the protection of customary rights of iwi and hapū, and the exercise of their kawa, tikanga (including kaitiakitanga), and mātauranga in relation to their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu, wāhi tūpuna, and other taonga.

Our work to amend the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 will give a stronger voice to Te Tiriti, te ao Māori, and mātauranga Māori. This will improve how mātauranga Māori, data, evidence, knowledge and science are shared, collected, managed and protected.

Working with Te Arawhiti – the Office for Māori Crown Relations – we will continue to negotiate the settlement of historic breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including the development of contemporary claims. These processes seek to resolve Tiriti breaches that relate to natural resources and ensure a greater role for our Treaty partners in environmental decision-making.

<b>Activity</b>		
<b>1. Work in partnership for the best environmental outcomes</b>	<b>2. Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments</b>	<b>3. Māori rights and interests, and worldviews are evident in our policy advice</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>		
Māori are actively contributing their knowledge to the design and delivery of fit-for-purpose environmental policy solutions, and the identification of future environmental issues, opportunities, and aspirations	Gains made to Crown-Māori relationships through Treaty settlements are maintained and built upon We are working together in partnership beyond Treaty commitments	Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental policy is stronger because it includes te ao Māori approaches which are holistic, sustainable, and intergenerational
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>		
Māori are engaged early in the policy process to ensure environmental policy is designed collaboratively, and that the voices, experiences, mātauranga and aspirations of Māori are reflected accurately in our work	Treaty settlement commitments are understood and resourced, and we are tracking our delivery We conduct Tiriti negotiations in good faith	Treaty analysis tools guide the design of policy that accurately reflects the rights and interests of Māori, and gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>		
We have established processes and resourcing to engage Māori to co-produce and collaborate on policy Māori engagement plans are coordinated across the natural resource sector, reducing the negative impact on Māori communities The role of Māori as custodians of nature, agents of change, and holders of indigenous solutions is understood by policy makers	All of our people can access up-to-date information on our Tiriti settlement commitments We are transparent about our delivery of Tiriti settlement commitments, and report annually on these through Te Arawhiti Our Tiriti commitments are upheld, transitioned, and delivered in the new resource management system	The quality of our policy is underpinned by our Māori policy and engagement standards, and are improving annually The use of mātauranga and Māori data in environmental policy making is protected through protocols and benefit-sharing agreements

# Improve the quality of New Zealand's urban environments

With most of the population living in urban areas, the quality of these environments has a major impact on our quality of life.

Population growth in recent decades has centred on urban areas, but urban planning has not anticipated or responded to support this growth well. How our urban centres grow in the next 20 years is a critical issue for Aotearoa New Zealand's urban environments.

The National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) and the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021 (RMA-EHS) aim to improve housing supply and create well-functioning urban environments. Supporting the implementation of the NPS-UD and RMA-EHS is a key focus for us.

The NPS-UD directs councils to open up more development capacity for housing and business land close to jobs, community services, public transport, and other amenities.

The RMA-EHS introduced the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) to enable development of up to three dwellings (up to three storeys high) on most residential sites as of right. It also introduced the Intensification Streamlined Planning Process, which certain councils will use to implement the MDRS and the NPS-UD.

The *Our freshwater 2020* report states that most rivers and lakes in urban areas are polluted. While there are gaps in our knowledge about the complexity of types and sources of pollution, and their cumulative effects, this should not prevent or postpone action.

We are working together with other government agencies and local government to develop a national environmental monitoring and reporting system, and a strategy to prioritise and fill important knowledge and data gaps. This needs time and investment, and will require addressing inconsistencies, bridging knowledge gaps, and listening to the voice of te ao Māori.

We also work with local government to ensure that freshwater plans, including the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 give effect to national direction for urban environments and to ensure the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality regulations are effectively implemented.

Finally, Aotearoa New Zealand's urban environments must have modern waste management practices, including standardised kerbside collections for household recycling and separation of food scraps and other organic waste. We are working with the waste sector to ensure that the infrastructure for modern waste management practices is in place.

<b>Activity</b>		
<b>1. Develop and implement urban national direction</b>	<b>2. Support the effective regulation and integrated management of urban land use and water infrastructure</b>	<b>3. Support local government to implement the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>		
Improved functioning of urban environments	Improved ecosystem health in urban water	Improved air quality measures
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>		
Urban development and infrastructure are planned, designed and delivered to meet the needs of current and future communities	Urban water is well protected and managed by local authorities and water service providers and reflects Te Mana o te Wai	Aotearoa New Zealand's air quality standards reflect our improved understanding of the health impacts of air pollution
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>		
The needs of current and future communities are reflected in the planning decisions by local authorities as required by urban and infrastructure national direction	Local authorities and water service providers can demonstrate progress towards improving urban water outcomes and upholding Te Mana o te Wai	Statutory functions are carried out to support the implementation of the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality

# Build a sustainable and resilient land-use and food system

The land sector, which includes agriculture, forestry and horticulture, makes a significant contribution to the economy and is an important part of Aotearoa New Zealand's identity. It relies on healthy water, soils and biodiversity, and a favourable climate.

Recent decades have seen significant changes in the land sector, from where we live to what we produce, with consequent flow-on effects on the environment. *Our Long-term Insights Briefing 2022* shows that if these trends continue, pressures on land use could increase, affecting the wellbeing of future generations. Securing a sustainable future for both land use and people will require collaboration across society and engagement in a public conversation about future national priorities.

More broadly, the food system, including the way we distribute and consume food, has a significant influence on how we use our land, and environmental outcomes. In the **emissions reduction plan**, the Government committed to separate food scraps and other organic waste. This will help reduce waste and improve the circularity of the food system by returning carbon and nutrients to the soil.

The Ministry supports the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package to safeguard and enhance freshwater, including the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), and the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020.

Regional councils will be developing regional freshwater plans that implement the NPS-FM. Freshwater farm plans will tie into these plans and demonstrate how freshwater regulatory requirements are being met on farms.

Established under Part 9A of the Resource Management Act, the plans are a way for councils, communities, farmers and growers to work together towards freshwater outcomes. They will identify clear farm practice, ecosystem health, and catchment outcomes, and then demonstrate how to achieve these. Freshwater farm plans will be a key tool to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai.

We support our key partners, including local government, iwi and communities to improve freshwater quality. This includes supporting implementation of farm plans, amending local government freshwater plans to give effect to the new regulatory framework, and funding activities through the Jobs for Nature programme.

We are working with the primary sector through He Waka Eke Noa, a partnership to help farmers measure, manage, and reduce on-farm greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

We will also complete the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity and then support its implementation.



<b>Activity</b>			
<b>1. Ensure the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package on a kaupapa of Te Mana o te Wai</b>	<b>2. Develop and implement a pricing mechanism for agricultural greenhouse gas emissions</b>	<b>3. Invest in action to improve the freshwater management system and the health of water bodies</b>	<b>4. Provide support for implementing national direction on indigenous biodiversity</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>			
Prevent further degradation of, and set the path for restoring our water bodies	Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture decrease in line with our domestic and international targets and budgets	Improved health of waterways, lakes, groundwater and receiving environments Improved local level capacity and capability across the freshwater management system	Protect, maintain and restore indigenous biodiversity, that recognises tangata whenua as kaitiaki and people and communities, including landowners, as stewards
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>			
The impact of high-risk activities on freshwater is reducing Prevent loss of key freshwater ecosystems Support the implementation of the improved freshwater management system	Farmers understand their on-farm emissions and are taking actions to reduce them Emissions from agriculture are decreasing	Ecosystem health is improving through targeted investment Councils, Māori and communities can better participate in the freshwater management system	Councils identify significant areas for, and manage impacts on indigenous biodiversity in their plans Support the development of market mechanisms to incentivise active management of biodiversity Investigate a national system for monitoring indigenous biodiversity
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>			
Effective delivery of the land and water regional plans Effective implementation of freshwater farm plans Risk indicators for freshwater ecosystem health are reducing	Percentage of farmers who know their emissions number Percentage of farmers with a greenhouse gas farm plan Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture	Funded projects achieve their stated objectives to improve ecosystem health	Councils have identified Significant Natural Areas in their plans Market mechanisms are operating to support biodiversity protection

# Transition New Zealand to a climate-resilient, low-emission, circular economy

Climate change is the most significant environmental challenge of our time, highlighting the need to make the most of our natural resources by transitioning to a circular economy.

Science tells us that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels gives us the best chance of avoiding the worst effects of climate change. The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme is an important tool in Aotearoa New Zealand's response to climate change. Together with other agencies, the Ministry administers this scheme, which puts a price on greenhouse gases to incentivise the reduction of emissions, investment in energy efficiency, and tree planting.

However, Aotearoa must also prepare for the effects of climate change that cannot be avoided. Our existing social, cultural, and economic systems were designed for a climate that no longer exists, and they must adapt to ensure Aotearoa thrives in a changing climate. Both aspects of climate change – mitigation and adaptation – require an economy-wide response.

We produce and support the implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand's emissions reduction and national adaptation plans to meet the 2050 target for Aotearoa set under the Zero Carbon Act.

In addition, Aotearoa New Zealand's current pattern of creating and managing waste is not economically, environmentally, or socially sustainable. We have one of the highest levels of waste per capita in the OECD, estimated at nearly 700 kilograms per person in 2021. Disposal of waste and resources generates around four per cent of Aotearoa New Zealand's gross greenhouse gas emissions.

There are significant opportunities to reduce the amount of waste we generate and improve how we manage it, which will also help reduce emissions. We need to make a significant transition in the way things are made, used, managed and disposed of to meet the 2050 target for greenhouse gas emissions.

The release of the new waste strategy, 'Getting rid of waste for a circular Aotearoa New Zealand 2023', will set the vision of Aotearoa becoming a low-emission, low-waste society built on a circular economy, by 2050.

New legislation is being developed to create the systems and tools we need to reach this vision, along with a programme to implement system changes. This includes standardising kerbside recycling collections and enabling separate collection of food scraps and other organic waste.

<b>Activity</b>				
<b>1. Lead Aotearoa New Zealand's efforts to reduce emissions</b>	<b>2. Implement the national adaptation plan</b>	<b>3. Develop policy and implement the Waste Strategy</b>	<b>4. Strengthen operational and compliance activities for a low-waste, low-emission, circular economy</b>	<b>5. Invest to create a low-waste, low-emission circular economy</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>				
Greenhouse gas emissions decrease	Aotearoa is less vulnerable, and more resilient to, the impacts of climate change and has a greater capacity to adapt	Aotearoa progresses to a low-waste, low-emission, circular economy, meaning less waste is produced and disposed of at landfill	Aotearoa progresses to a low-waste, low-emission, circular economy, meaning less waste is produced and disposed of at landfill	Aotearoa progresses to a low-waste, low-emission, circular economy, meaning less waste is produced and disposed of at landfill
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>				
Aotearoa reduces greenhouse gas emissions in line with emissions budgets	Aotearoa makes better informed decisions by considering climate-related risks  Central and local government are driving climate-resilient development in the right locations, including the option of managed retreat  Climate resilience is considered across government policy	On track for waste strategy 2030 targets for waste generation, disposal and emissions	On track for waste strategy 2030 targets for waste generation, disposal and emissions	On track for waste strategy 2030 targets for waste generation, disposal and emissions
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>				
Aotearoa has an agreed suite of policies and measures to achieve our emissions reduction plans and budgets  Aotearoa New Zealand's emissions are reducing in line with the emissions budgets and the 2050 target	Central and local government are planning for the impacts of climate change	We have in place and are implementing an action investment plan	Improved compliance in the waste sector, and harm from waste is reduced	Investment supports resource efficiency, reuse, recovery and recycling

# Improve how New Zealand's natural resources are allocated

Aotearoa New Zealand's natural resources, particularly freshwater, are in high demand. How Aotearoa manages this demand while ensuring the environment flourishes is becoming increasingly important.

Water is a key environmental and economic asset that helps Aotearoa thrive. Electricity generation, agriculture and manufacturing, drinking water, and recreational activities all rely on access to water resources. The way we allocate freshwater will affect our future prosperity, making it necessary to act now to secure the value of the resource and allocate wisely within environmental limits.

Under the Resource Management Act freshwater allocation is managed by local government. Every region has at least some catchments where water resources are under pressure or are over-allocated. In a growing number of catchments and aquifers, the volume of water allocated for use has reached or exceeded sustainable environmental limits. These resources will come under further pressure from changes in rainfall patterns, and increasing drought and flooding, intensifying with climate change.

The resource management reforms will bring an improved allocation system, with regional and unitary councils using the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management to put in place local limits for water allocation.

We will work with iwi partners and associated groups, regional councils, industry and other stakeholders through policy development and implementation to drive better decision-making about freshwater use and allocation.

<b>Activity</b>	
<b>1. Provide advice on developing a new system to allocate freshwater takes and discharges</b>	<b>2. Engage with Māori as Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners in the development of a new system to allocate resources, with a focus on freshwater allocation matters</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>	
A fair and efficient system for the allocation of resources that supports achieving environmental outcomes	Equitable access to resources for Māori
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>	
Establish the legislation for the resource allocation system Support implementation of the allocation system, including further policy advice	Established processes for more equitable allocation of resources, including at a local level
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>	
Legislation for resource allocation is passed The tools and policy required to implement the new allocation system are in place or under development	A framework and process are established for local level engagement between the Crown and iwi/hapū on freshwater allocation matters Engagement occurs at a local level between the Crown and iwi/hapū on freshwater allocation

# Connect people and communities with te taiao

We need concerted action to turn around many of the environmental trends we see in Aotearoa and around the world. Internationally, there is a focus on a 'decade of action' for biodiversity, freshwater, ocean and climate goals.

While governments can bring about systemic change, many people are already acting to reduce the impact of their activities and restore te taiao – the environment.

We can strengthen people's understanding of the relationship between our way of life and the environment alongside policy advice and support for delivering changes to the environmental management system.

Our environmental reporting provides a key pillar for engagement. Data and evidence on environmental trends highlight how our decisions affect te taiao and enable people to make informed decisions.

We partner with Stats NZ on an environmental reporting series. The latest report, **Our marine environment 2022**, examines the most pressing issues in our oceans, seas, coastlines and estuaries.

We have proposed amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 so that future reports will better inform environmental decision-making. These amendments are designed to drive a focus on key issues and desired outcomes, to increase the monitoring and reporting system's influence, and to better meet our partnership responsibilities and objectives in terms of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We also partner with environmental leaders across Aotearoa and invest in public education activities to accelerate action and achieve better environmental outcomes sooner.

Our partnership with **Toimata** supports the delivery of EnviroSchools and Te Aho Tū Roa to 1,500 early childhood centres and schools nationwide. We also partner with **BLAKE** by funding and co-developing BLAKE Inspire, a programme to support rangatahi develop as environmental leaders in their communities.



<b>Activity</b>	
<b>1. Report on the state of the environment</b>	<b>2. Provide information to the public on the environment</b>
<b>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b>	
People are informed about the health of the environment and make decisions that lead to effective, enduring environmental stewardship and kaitiakitanga (guardianship)	Improved access to and understanding of the state of the environment People understand what they can do, and act on environmental issues
<b>IMPACT (3-5 YEARS)</b>	
Environmental reporting is more accessible and used to inform decision-making More national environmental data sets are available	More people are aware of and care about the environment More people are taking action to respond to environmental issues
<b>IMPACT INDICATORS</b>	
Increased use of our environmental reporting Increased environmental indicator content in our environmental reporting	Increased public awareness of key environmental issues Increased self-reporting of action taken for the good of the environment



# Ā tātou āheitanga ā-tari

## Our organisational capabilities

There are the four areas that guide us in successfully delivering our work programme: our people, knowledge, relationships and systems.



# People

We stand on the strength of our people. We need a workforce of the right size and with the right capabilities to deliver our work programme now and in the future. We know that we are strongest when we have diversity through different backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and capabilities that connect us to all the people of Aotearoa.

We have re-aligned Tui Raumata, our diversity and inclusion strategy, under three pillars: diversity, equity and inclusion.

Tui Raumata draws from Papa Pounamu, the Public Service Commission's work programme to grow diversity and inclusion practices across the public service. The five focus areas of Papa Pounamu are woven into Tui Raumata and inform our initiatives and focus areas.

We continue working towards more innovative and inclusive practices and focusing on growing critical capabilities, including mātauranga Māori, and understanding and applying Māori perspectives alongside data and science.

We are focused on large system reform across multiple domains and are further strengthening our role in policy implementation by partnering at a local level. Our partnerships centre on regional iwi/Māori and national pan-tribal partnerships with new regional lead 'kaiwhakaterere' navigator roles to act as the connector between us, local government, and our Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners.

Our partnering at a local level is being made easier by our growing regional presence across the motu, and with offices now in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch.

Our sustainability strategy outlines five areas to focus on for our people over the next three years. It calls for us to create an environment where our people can flourish and includes lifting te ao Māori capability, diversity and inclusion, and how we grow our people's knowledge of reducing carbon emissions and waste.

The health, safety and wellbeing of our people continues to be a priority, focussed on:

- our health and safety systems
- critical risks
- balancing workload pressures
- improving health and safety governance.

We provide equal employment opportunities through recruitment and selection, career development and progression, training, and employment conditions. We make flexible working equally available to all our people. We continue to focus on addressing instances of inequality in pay.

# Knowledge

Grounding decisions in data, science and evidence is essential for our policy and system reforms and assessing the effectiveness of policies and operational interventions.

We work across government and the science system to strengthen our environmental monitoring and reporting system. We are working to integrate te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori into our wider knowledge system, create pathways to partner with Māori, and engage the voices of youth and communities across the motu.

Our priorities include driving a strategic approach to our investment in science and data. Leveraging data collected by other entities will enable longer-term planning of required updates and build our science capability.

Together with Stats NZ, we report on the state of different aspects of the environment every six months and on the environment as a whole every three years under the

Environmental Reporting Act 2015. We have proposed amendments to the Environmental Reporting Act so future environment reports have more impact.

We will strengthen our environmental monitoring and reporting system and lead the work on an environment and climate research strategy. This will set out priorities and research goals for the Natural Resources Cluster and help direct investment in foundational environmental science and evidence.

We will also fulfil the statutory requirement under the Public Service Act 2020 of producing a Long-term Insights Briefing every three years. The briefings are thought pieces on the future of medium and long-term trends, risks and opportunities that affect Aotearoa and its society. They include policy options for responding to these matters.

# Relationships

As our work evolves, so has the need to partner and engage with others. Our work must be guided by those with the right knowledge and experience to successfully implement policy.

We partner with a range of organisations to establish, scale or accelerate system change for the benefit of te taiao. Our partners are varied but all are focused on sustainability and improving environmental outcomes. They include other government agencies, business collaborations, non-government organisations, iwi-led groups, and other community groups. Examples of our strategic partners include Creative HQ, The Aotearoa Circle, the Sustainable Business Council, and the Sustainable Business Network.

We must also meet our Tiriti responsibilities and work with iwi/Māori for outcomes that support and protect te taiao for the future.

Partnerships and engagement are at the forefront of what we do – from our iwi/Māori and strategic partnerships to communication and Crown monitoring programmes. With such a complex reform programme, we are committed to continuous improvement in how we engage and how we support others to engage with us. We have created a specialist engagement hub to provide greater support and build on these relationships.

# Systems

We have adapted our organisational systems and processes as we grow, including governance and management of our growing work portfolio.

Our future investment in organisational systems will focus on deepening our capability. This includes our Digital Strategy. A digitally engaged Ministry will offer major benefits for the public, communities and business with more sophisticated targeting of policy interventions, and better social and public engagement. It will include harnessing tools like open data and automation, to help us be smarter and more efficient.

Our strategy leverages the Strategy for a Digital Public Service, focussing on:

- 1. Data and evidence.** Clear, accessible and accurate data and evidence helps us develop our policy and keeps Ministers and stakeholders informed about our work.
- 2. Telling our story.** We have the tools to engage with stakeholders at every stage of policy development and implementation.
- 3. Digital foundations.** These are the core functions and processes that maintain our technical systems.
- 4. Platforms and integrations.** The software, programmes and workflows needed so we can work more efficiently and effectively.
- 5. Security.** Protecting our people, information and interests by ensuring the right people have the right access to information and systems.





*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*



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