

## RMA Reforms Prioritised

The new government has indicated it intends to press ahead with the RMA reforms it signalled, but was unable to pass without support, earlier this year (see links to previous articles outlining the proposed changes here and here). The fact National no longer has a majority in Parliament however raises the question of whether the full package of reforms previously flagged will make it into a Bill.

A few key aspects of the proposed changes that were previously on the table are:

- Consolidating sections 6 and 7 of the RMA into a list of matters of national importance that decision-makers must "recognise and provide for". This proposed change proved to be hotly contested in the consultation round, because it combines 'protection' values and 'use and development' principles.
- The option of having one resource management plan per district (or other agreed area) instead of a district plan, regional policy statement and various regional plans.
- Introducing a national plan template that Councils must follow.
- Refining the resource consent process, for instance by introducing a 10 day fast-track process for simple consents, exemptions for technical breaches of rules and changes to 'affected party' criteria.
- More consistent use of National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards.

Now that the new Minister for the Environment Dr Nick Smith has been confirmed, it is possible a Bill containing changes will be quickly introduced and sent to Select Committee. The public will be provided an opportunity to submit on the Bill.

While the final form of the changes remains to be seen it is fair to say this will be a significant reform package with major implications. We will continue to monitor the progress of this reform.

For any further information please contact one of our Resource Management team members.