

## Resource Management - National Direction Reforms: Overview

### Wide-ranging changes are proposed to National Direction under the RMA. This is the first in our series of five articles

#### Background

While the Government intends to replace the RMA next year, it has also announced consultation on a raft of changes to national direction under the RMA.

The proposals are focused on changes that can make an immediate difference to achieving the Government's goals in relation to easing regulatory burden, improving clarity and enabling more flexibility in land and water use – particularly in the areas of infrastructure, housing, agriculture and freshwater. They are targeted at consenting decisions, rather than requiring councils to make changes to their planning documents, given the upcoming legislative reform.

National direction, which includes National Policy Statements (NPS) and National Environment Standards (NES), sits at the top of the resource management planning hierarchy. They are important policy documents that feed into regional and district planning and council consenting decisions.

NPSs set out objectives and policies for matters of national significance to achieve the sustainable management of resources. Regional policy statements, regional plans and district plans must give effect to them and consenting authorities must have regard to them when making decisions. NESs are regulations that set technical standards, methods or requirements at a national level - consenting requirements in NESs apply beyond those contained in local planning instruments.

#### Proposed changes

The proposed changes have been presented in three packages:

- Package One – Infrastructure and Development

- Package Two – Primary Sector
- Package Three – Freshwater

[Package One \(Infrastructure and Development\)](#) is aimed at enabling opportunities and choice for housing by unlocking development capacity, supporting fit for purpose infrastructure and enabling delivery of high-quality future infrastructure, including doubling renewable energy generation by 2050. It includes:

- Two new NPSs (for infrastructure and natural hazards);
- Two new NESs (for [granny flats](#) and Papakāinga);
- Amendments to two existing NPSs (for renewable electricity generation and electricity transmission); and
- Amendments to two existing NESs (for electricity transmission activities and telecommunication activities).

[Package Two \(Primary Sector\)](#) is aimed at better supporting the agricultural, forestry, and aquaculture sectors by amending provisions that may restrict or delay development. It includes amendments to the following existing national direction instruments:

- Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture) Regulations 2020
- Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry) Regulations 2017
- New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010
- National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022
- Resource Management (Stock Exclusion) Regulations 2020 (Stock Exclusion Regulations)

It also includes amendments to mining and quarrying provisions in:

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**Article title**  
(Continued)

- National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023
- National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022
- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020
- Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020

[Package Three \(Freshwater\)](#) is aimed at simplifying compliance and implementation, and 'rebalancing' the NPS-FM to better reflect the interests of all water users, while ensuring freshwater ecosystems continue to be protected. Feedback is sought on options to amend freshwater national direction, including whether the changes should be implemented through amending the current national direction under the RMA or whether it would be better to wait and implement changes under the new resource management legislation.

Read more about each package in our series of articles at the links above.

Detailed information on each package is available on the [Ministry for the Environment website](#). Submissions are due on **Sunday, 27 July 2025**.

Implementation support is expected to be developed alongside any new national direction, including updated guidance, templates, and technical assistance for councils and landowners.

Stakeholder submissions in the coming weeks will be critical in shaping the final form of these national direction instruments, and whether they can truly strike a balance between economic growth, environmental integrity, and cultural values.

### Upcoming consultation

The Government has also signalled that a fourth package of proposals relating to the Going For Housing Growth programme is coming. Feedback will be sought

on how proposals aimed at freeing up land for development and removing unnecessary planning barriers could fit into the new resource management system. Consultation is expected to commence in June 2025.

### Want to know more?

If you have any questions about the proposed changes to national direction or would like help making a submission, please contact our specialist [Resource Management team](#).