

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Building a Brighter Future



Improving resource management

Sensible management of our resources is critical to protect the environment and promote stronger economic growth, to create higher-paid jobs and build a more prosperous New Zealand.

National is committed to the underlying principles of the Resource Management Act (RMA), including sustainable management, an effects-based approach, and community involvement in decisions on public resources.

Simplifying and streamlining the RMA

National's reform programme has been about simplifying and streamlining RMA processes, providing stronger central government direction, and addressing problems in areas such as infrastructure, water and aquaculture.

Our phase 1 reforms involved 150 amendments to simplify and streamline the RMA, to reduce costs, uncertainties, and delays. This has improved outcomes for the environment, supported business investment, and encouraged stronger economic growth.

Our phase 2 reforms will reduce delays around medium-sized projects, improve freshwater management, and better manage natural hazard risks. We will also better align the RMA's planning processes with transport and local government planning.

We will continue to ensure that the sustainable use of our resources goes hand-in-hand with stronger economic growth.

Six-month consenting for regional projects

National will establish a six-month time limit for decisions on regional projects. That means medium-sized developments that need notified consents will be processed more quickly.

Key facts

- Set a nine-month time limit for consenting projects of national significance through the Environmental Protection Agency. Major projects such as Tauhara Geothermal Power and the Waterview Motorway Connection have been consented in record times.
- Streamlined and simplified the Resource Management Act.
- Reduced late consents from 31% in 2008 to 5% in 2011. The number of late consents has fallen by around 10,000 a year.
- Adopted National Policy Statements on coastal management, renewable energy, and freshwater management.
- Adopted national standards on contaminated sites and water metering to improve consistency around the country.
- Advanced policy work on fresh-water reform through the Land and Water Forum, and on infrastructure and urban design through Technical Advisory Groups.

National has...

Simplified and streamlined the Resource Management Act

- ✓ Made 150 amendments to the RMA to reduce delays, uncertainties, and costs – the biggest reform of the RMA since 1991.
- ✓ Removed frivolous, vexatious, and anti-competitive objections that can add thousands of dollars to consent applicants.
- ✓ Removed the Ministerial veto on coastal consents.
- ✓ Improved plan development and plan change processes, and resource consent processes.
- ✓ Strengthened compliance by increasing penalties and providing for a wider range of enforcement.
- ✓ Established the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) as a stand-alone Crown agency.
- ✓ Appointed a Technical Advisory Group to review Sections 6 and 7 of the RMA.

Sped up consent processing

- ✓ Established priority consenting through the EPA for projects of national significance, limiting the consent period to nine months.
- ✓ Required councils to provide a discount for late processing of resource consents to reduce delays.

Provided greater Central Government direction

- ✓ Developed National Policy Statements on:
 - Renewable energy generation
 - Fresh water management
 - Coastal management.
- ✓ Introduced spatial planning for city development.

Supported Canterbury

- ✓ Streamlined resource management processes to speed up land remediation work.
- ✓ Fast-tracked Lyttelton Port reclamation for disposing earthquake rubble and supported the Burwood recycling facility and the re-use of demolished building material.

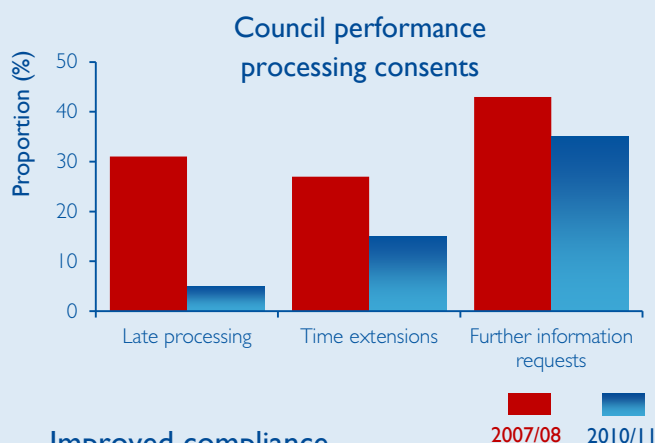
Our results so far...

Less red tape

- Vexatious objections due to trade competition are no longer allowed. Countdown Warkworth was consented in just four months under National. Pak 'N Save Wairau Road on the North Shore took six years to get consent under Labour.
- Tree trimming no longer requires resource consent in areas such as Auckland. This is saving households \$3 million a year.

Faster consent processing

- The massive \$2 billion Waterview project has been consented in just nine months.
- Dramatic improvements in resource consent processing.



Improved compliance

- Fines doubled and twice as many convictions for consent breaches.
- Compliance levels consistently improving for key sectors such as farming.

What we will do next...

1. Ensure responsible resource management supports the government's growth objectives

- Introduce a six-month statutory time limit on the consenting of medium-sized projects.

National's phase 1 reforms have made a huge difference to the timeliness of national-scale infrastructure projects. They set a nine-month timeframe for decisions where previously the process often took many years.

We've also reduced the time for processing of small non-notified consents. Penalties for late processing have seen late consents drop from 16,107 in 2007/08 to 1807 in 2010/11.

Our phase 2 reforms will set firm time limits for processing of medium-sized consents – those that require notification. These projects are typically new industrial developments, new subdivisions, new retail developments, and regional infrastructure. Around 1600 medium-sized consents are processed a year.

We will pass a new law setting a statutory maximum timeframe for these consents.

- Strengthen urban design provisions and simplify planning processes in line with the "Competitive Cities" discussion paper.
- Further reform is needed to streamline the planning process and get durable outcomes for all stakeholders.
- Review the criteria that persons exercising functions and powers under the RMA are required to recognise, provide for, and have particular regard to.

The RMA gives more weight to the impact a subdivision has on salmon than the land's susceptibility to natural hazards. We need to carefully consider what must be included when applications are considered.

2. Simplify plan-making

- Improve the plan-making process between resource management, transport, and local government.

There is poor integration between the resource management, land transport, and local government planning processes. This makes the overall planning system cumbersome, unresponsive, and expensive.

National's phase 2 reforms will simplify plan-making. We will ensure that planning for our communities can be done with a much simpler planning and consultation process covering resource management, transport and local government.

These reforms will be based on the Technical Advisory Group reports on how to improve processes for urban design and infrastructure.

3. Revise Sections 6 and 7 of the RMA

- Better address natural hazard risks.

The lack of any mention in the RMA of natural hazards has been exposed as a weakness following the Canterbury earthquakes. Significant new areas of subdivision are being approved without any consideration of liquefaction risk. National will revise the RMA to include specific consideration of risks from natural hazards.

- Better manage the growth of our urban environments.

The vast majority of resource consents are for urban developments yet Sections 6 and 7 give little guidance to decision-makers on how these can be better managed.

National will amend the RMA to make guidance clearer.

→ Repeal and replace the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control, and Land Drainage Acts.

These Acts date back to the early 20th Century. We will amend the RMA to incorporate remnants of these Acts into the one statute.

4. Improve water management

→ Progress the Land and Water Forum's recommendations to improve freshwater management, quality, and allocation.

We established the Land and Water Forum as a collaborative process to help agree on a way forward and balance economic and environmental priorities. The Forum has made 51 initial recommendations. We will make progress on these as soon as possible.

5. Encourage collaborative agreements

→ Provide incentives for parties in RMA proceedings to collaborate and agree on solutions to environmental problems.

Too often, RMA applications turn into an adversarial process where opposite sides reach for expensive legal remedies. National supports parties reaching a collaborative outcome rather than seeking a legal ruling subject to endless appeals.

Labour would take New Zealand backwards

Labour:

- ✘ Allowed Ministers to interfere in the Environment Court's decisions (eg. Whangamata Marina).
- ✘ Did nothing to streamline or simplify processes under the RMA.
- ✘ Imposed extended delays on major projects resulting in significant increases in cost to the taxpayer and developers, and ultimately slowing down our economic growth.
- ✘ Allowed adversarial processes in consent applications to become the norm.
- ✘ Failed to improve water management. This inaction inhibited development and growth, and led to more pollution in our rivers and lakes and over-allocation of water in some areas.

The situation in Canterbury highlights Labour's failure to provide leadership in water management. Labour was aware of Environment Canterbury's shortcomings, including that fact there was no regional plan in place 20 years after it was required by law. It takes years for rivers and lakes to become noticeably polluted, yet Labour did nothing to address this historical problem or put in place measures to improve the situation in the future.

The poor state of Te Waihora Lake Ellesmere is an example of Labour's failure to provide leadership in protecting and remediating our lakes and waterways.

Our environment – and our economy – can't afford another dose of Labour.