

Hon Chris Bishop

Minister of Housing
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform
Minister of Transport
Leader of the House
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Sport and Recreation



31 March 2025

Greetings,

I am writing to update you on the progress the Coalition Government is making to improve the resource management system, particularly in relation to Phase Three of our reform programme.

On 24 March 2025, Cabinet agreed to replace the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) with two new pieces of legislation:

- *The Planning Act* – focused on regulating the use, development and enjoyment of land
- *The Natural Environment Act* – focused on the use, protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

On Friday, I announced further detail on the approach to reform, including a refocused approach to national direction under the RMA through Phase Two of our reforms. You can read my speech on the Beehive website, at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-nz-planning-institute-conference>.

New Blueprint to replace the RMA

Last year, the Government set ten principles for the new resource management system. In September 2024, we established an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to test and further refine these principles, and to develop a blueprint for reform.

The EAG delivered its blueprint earlier this year. It provides a workable package of 21 recommendations that address the main failings of the RMA and deliver a system that will make it easier to get things done in New Zealand, better recognise property rights, and improve environmental protection.

Cabinet has agreed that the EAG blueprint delivers a workable basis for a new planning system and has made in-principle decisions on a range of new features for the system, drawing upon the blueprint.

I encourage you to read the EAG blueprint which has been published on the Ministry for the Environment's (the Ministry's) website at: <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/blueprint-for-resource-management-reform/>.

The cabinet paper noting Cabinet's decisions on the EAG report can be read on the Ministry's website here: <https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/cabinet-papers-and-regulatory-impact-statements/replacing-the-rma1991/>.

Next steps and further information

Over the next few months, detailed policy work will be undertaken by government agencies to implement Cabinet's decisions. As part of this process, agencies will be consulting with local government, iwi and key stakeholders to provide good advice to Ministers.

I would welcome your participation in this process.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get RMA reform done properly and comprehensively. I want to stress to you that the government is intent on serious reform. A shift from a precautionary to a more permissive approach to resource management will unlock development opportunities, streamline processes, and enhance New Zealand's ability to meet its housing, infrastructure, and environmental objectives.

We are aiming to introduce two Bills in Parliament in late 2025 with a view to Parliament enacting these in mid-2026. We intend to engage with the Opposition during this process.

Rescoped National Direction

Cabinet has also reconsidered the scope of the national direction programme in light of the swift progress we have made on Phase Three of our reform programme. Last year I announced that we had decided to progress proposals on 21 national direction instruments.

Given the complexity of Phase Three reform, we will now be focusing on targeted proposals for 16 instruments that will have immediate impact on the resource management system while the new resource management system is developed and implemented.

We expect to release consultation documents relating to the national direction programme by mid-year 2025. You can find a fact sheet on the national direction on the Ministry's website here: <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-direction/>.

Thank you for your engagement on this important programme of reform.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Bishop'.

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Responsible for RMA Reform

Cc: Simon Court MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister Responsible for RMA Reform