

Freshwater plan looking for watershed moment

The Government's plan to improve freshwater quality is ambitious in scope and will require significant change – and this is before we get to the trickier allocation and ownership issues.

But Environment Minister David Parker is determined to begin the rehabilitation of the country's rivers and lakes "within a generation".

We provide a summary of the discussion document. Any business which uses large amounts of water will be affected. Submissions close on 31 October 2019.

[↪ Chapman Tripp commentary](#)

Tribunal gets tough on water

The Waitangi Tribunal report on the National Freshwater and Geothermal Resources claim filed by the New Zealand Māori Council has found that neither the Resource Management Act (RMA) nor the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Freshwater Management are "Treaty compliant".

In the accompanying letter to Ministers, the Tribunal states,

"Our view is that the Crown must now recognise Māori proprietary rights and provide what the New Zealand Māori Council called "proprietary redress". We recommend that the Crown arrange for an allocation on a percentage basis to iwi and hapū, according to a regional catchment based scheme".

Among the Tribunal's other recommendations are that the Crown:

- amends the RMA's Māori participation provisions to provide effectively for co-governance and co-management of freshwater taonga
- monitors the Treaty performance of councils
- promulgates stock exclusion regulations "urgently", and
- replaces the first come, first served system with a water allocative regime which recognises Te Mana o te Wai (a concept that encompasses the holistic health and well-being of a water body).

The Tribunal stopped its inquiry at the end of the previous Government's "Next Steps" reforms in 2017.

[↪ Report](#)

Tax policy work programme

Top of the Government's tax policy work programme for 2019-20 is a review of measures to discourage land banking and to encourage residential development. Other work streams include the tax treatment of spending on innovation, and whether the tax system has a role in driving infrastructure investment.

[Work programme](#)

Product stewardship schemes for high waste products

The Government is proposing to reduce waste by moving from a throwaway "take-make-dispose" mentality to a circular "make-use-return" economy in which businesses are encouraged to take responsibility for the life-cycle impacts of their products.

The changes will be implemented through the powers already available under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008.

Six product groups have been identified for this treatment – tyres, agrichemicals, electrical and electronic goods (e-waste), refrigerants, farm plastics and packaging (beverage packaging and single use plastic packaging).

[Discussion paper](#)

High value soils NPS

The Government is consulting on a proposed NPS to ensure that highly productive land is maintained for food production by protecting it from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

[Paper](#)

Councils told to grow up and grow out

The planned NPS on Urban Development is out for consultation. It seeks to improve housing supply by requiring councils, particularly in high population growth areas, to make room for growth – both up and out.

Some provisions will have application across all urban environments. Others, setting more stringent requirements, will be restricted to "major urban centres" where the pressure on housing is greatest. Identified for this status are: Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown (the Big Six).

[Chapman Tripp commentary](#)

Political policy coster

Legislation will be introduced this year to create a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) which will have the status of an Officer of Parliament and will provide political parties with independent and non-partisan policy costings.

Use of the PBO's services will be voluntary, although clearly a failure to submit a policy would be seized upon by political opponents as demonstrating a lack of confidence in its affordability.

At this stage, National is indicating that it will oppose the move.

[Announcement](#)