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## Comprehensive overhaul of the RMA

Hon David Parker

Environment

The Government has today launched a comprehensive overhaul of the Resource Management Act (RMA) to cut complexity and costs and better enable urban development, while also improving protection of the environment.

Environment Minister David Parker said that close to 30 years after it was passed the country's main law managing built and natural environments was not working as well as intended.

"It is unacceptable for this cornerstone law to be underperforming in a country that values protection of the environment while properly housing its people," David Parker said.

"Our aim is to produce a revamped law fit for purpose in the 21st century that will cut complexity and cost while better protecting our environment.

"While not the sole cause of the housing crisis, planning rules are partly to blame. Environmental outcomes have been disappointing. Freshwater quality has been going backwards."

Amendments to the RMA since 1991 have added complexity.

"It's close to twice its original length, making the RMA more and more unwieldy to interpret, and hampering its effective implementation."

There had also been too little spatial planning in and around growing urban areas.

"We need to create a system that better enables economic growth within environmental limits and which aligns the economy with the environment. Further ad hoc patch-ups and work-arounds are not the answer. We need a thorough overhaul of the law."

David Parker said a reform project initiated by the Environmental Defence Society with input from Infrastructure NZ, the Property Council and the Employers and Manufacturers Association (Northern) had highlighted the need for change and how to address it.

"The review needs to address urban development, environmental bottom lines, and effective – but not overly complex –  
tion, including by Māori."

Also in scope is whether the crucial Part 2 – or its equivalent – should sit in the RMA or in a separate piece of law. Part 2 sets out the principles and purposes of the RMA and sets the objective of “sustainable management”.

“Subsequent legal cases have helped clarify what it means. We will take care not to unnecessarily discard those legal precedents,” David Parker said.

The overhaul will be led by a panel chaired by retired Appeal Court Judge Tony Randerson, who brings extensive legal and resource management expertise to the task.

It is expected to produce a proposal for reform, including drafts of key legislative provisions, by mid-2020.

Meanwhile, the Government will press ahead with work to improve freshwater quality and urban development, protect highly productive land and indigenous biodiversity, and reduce waste, because these are urgent and cannot wait for the comprehensive reform plan.

David Parker said a Bill to amend the current RMA will be introduced in the next few months to address urgent issues, pending the comprehensive rewrite.

## Related Documents

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Draft Terms of reference - comprehensive review of resource management system.pdf ( <a href="https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-07/Draft%20Terms%20of%20reference%20-%20comprehensive%20review%20of%20resource%20management%20system.pdf">https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-07/Draft%20Terms%20of%20reference%20-%20comprehensive%20review%20of%20resource%20management%20system.pdf</a> )	(269.95 KB)
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