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ESR to become PHF Science

15 May 2025

Please note: As of 1 July 2025, the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science (PHF Science) is the new name for the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR). Articles and information published before this date may reference the organisation's former name.

The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) will soon be known by a new name: the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science - or PHF Science - as part of the Government's science sector reform.

Changes to the names of all Crown Research Institutes were announced by Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology, Dr Shane Reti in May 2025, with the names aligning to each research organisation's core mission. ESR will be known by its new name from 1 July 2025.

"Our new name reflects the organisation's vital role in safeguarding public health through preventing, detecting, and responding to infectious diseases and environmental health hazards, as well as supporting public safety through forensic science services," said ESR Chief Executive Dr Ashley Bloomfield.

"We will continue to be a science and research driven organisation with a focus on creating positive impacts for people and communities, and we are now taking the next steps toward becoming a Public Research Organisation that makes an even bigger difference for New Zealand in these areas.

"This builds on the strengths for which we are already very well known, undertaking critical science in areas from detecting pathogens in groundwater to tracking viruses around New Zealand and supporting police investigations through robust forensic science, and much more."

This change forms part of a wider transformation of New Zealand's science system. In a major reform unveiled earlier this year, the Prime Minister announced the consolidation of seven Crown Research Institutes into three new Public Research Organisations (PROs), each focused on areas of national importance.

ESR's Board will remain unchanged it transitions to become the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science.