

How effective is NZ's resource management system?

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Ground-breaking research on how the current resource management system is failing the environment was released today.

The research commissioned by the EMA, New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development, Property Council New Zealand and conducted by the Environmental Defence Society (EDS), revealed that the environmental outcomes of the Resource Management Act (RMA) have not met expectations. In a surprising twist, four very different and diverse organisations are united in the view that the RMA and wider resource management system is not delivering for the environment nor for business.

The research, conducted by EDS Senior Policy Analyst Dr Marie Brown, revealed that 81% of respondents believed the environment had declined since 1991.

While the business side of the argument was well developed and the business industry organisations had strongly advocated that the current system was a handbrake on development and productivity, what was missing from the conversation was an empirical element relating to the environmental impact.

The ground-breaking EDS research found that the RMA had not met the environmental outcomes expected of it, and that the wider issue of how the nation's resources are managed was suboptimal.

A little more than one third of respondents said the RMA had not achieved its environmental goals, while the majority felt it had only been partly successful in doing so.

A lack of national direction has limited the potential of the resource management system to effectively and efficiently achieve its environmental goals.

"We undertook this research on the basis that the commissioning parties accepted the proposition that we need to manage natural resources subject to environmental bottom lines and limits. So getting an understanding of how well the present system delivers on that aspiration seemed a useful contribution to the wider reform discussions," says Gary Taylor, Chief Executive, Environmental Defence Society.

"It's time to put the party politics aside, and have a mature debate about how we as a nation want to effectively manage our resources to fully protect the environment and drive productivity. There is no quick fix solution on offer here. The issues are much wider than the Act itself. They include other planning laws, institutional arrangements, capacity and resourcing. Tinkering with the RMA will not address these issues - a wider systemic review is needed," says Stephen Selwood, Chief Executive, New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development.

"The Property Council has always known the RMA is failing cities and our long standing experiences of the housing crisis nationwide confirms this. The report validates that this failure extends to the natural environment as well. Our opinion is firm, a comprehensive review of the environmental protection and urban planning is needed so they succeed together," says Connal Townsend, Chief Executive, Property Council New Zealand.

"What's important is that we, as a nation, need to seriously explore the options for change and not just rush to ill-informed solutions. The options may be legislative, they may be institutional and they may be around process - whatever they are it's important that we marshal a new era for resource management," says Kim Campbell, CEO, EMA.

Report can be read [here](#), under embargo until 4pm today.

ENDS

For more information contact: Val Hayes | External Relations Manager, EMA, Email: val.hayes@ema.co.nz, Tel: +64 (0)9 367 0916, Mobile: +64 (0)21 615 549