



Environment Institute of
Australia and New Zealand Inc.

ABSTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

Title: Reporting on New Zealand's environment – a fresh approach

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Abstract:

In 2014, the New Zealand government made a bold decision: to place an obligation on itself and all future governments to regularly report on the environment. While the government has produced state of the environment reports in the past (in 1997 and 2007), there was no legislated obligation to do so, nor any guidelines setting out the scope, process or methods for reporting. The lack of such obligations or guidelines has implications for the transparency and integrity of reporting, and also for the continuity and consistency of reporting (because the greatest value we derive from environmental reporting is the ability to track changes over time).

Under the new regime, reports will be co-produced by the Ministry for the Environment and Statistics New Zealand to ensure that the data presented is statistically robust, and therefore trusted by New Zealanders and international stakeholders. The regime also creates a clear separation between the reporting function and political decision-making, so that the reports produced can be trusted as free from political influence. Once enacted, the new environmental reporting legislation will require the government to report on the whole of the environment every 3 years, and each environmental 'domain' (the air, atmosphere and climate, land, fresh water, and marine environments) every six months.

New Zealand's new approach to environmental reporting is based on a pressure-state-impact framework, enabling us to make connections between each domain, and view the environment as an interconnected whole, which affects, and is affected by, human society. The legislation also requires that environmental reporting reflects Te Ao Maori, the Maori worldview. This is a notable information gap, but one that we are taking steps to fill, in partnership with information providers throughout New Zealand, including iwi and hapu (tribes and sub-tribes). Integrating a Te Ao Maori will bring more depth and balance to environmental reporting, and enhance all New Zealanders' understanding of the environment and our relationship with it.