

Environmental Reporting Bill

New Zealand will have legally mandated environmental reporting, if the Environmental Reporting Bill (introduced 20 February 2014; first reading 5 March 2014) becomes law. The Bill's purpose is to create a national-level environmental reporting system that will ensure environmental reporting occurs on a regular basis and that it can be trusted as independent, fair and accurate.

Current *State of the Environment* reports are discretionary outputs published by the Ministry for the Environment. The timing of these reports and what is actually covered are at the discretion of the Minister.

The Government's objective in this Bill is to provide more certainty to the public about the scope, quality and frequency of independent environmental reporting. The Bill will require the Secretary for the Environment and Government Statistician to publish a report on 1 of 5 environmental domains (air, atmosphere and climate, freshwater, land and marine) every six months (Domain reports) and publish a further report that analyses the trends and interactions between the different Domain reports every three years (Synthesis reports).

For example Domain reports must include information on the biophysical state of a domain, trends over time, pressures driving changes, and the impacts of those changes on:

- Ecosystem integrity;
- Public health;
- Economic benefits derived from utilising natural resources; and
- Culture and recreation.

A key element of the reporting system is independence from the Government of the day by providing various roles for the Minister for the Environment, the Minister of Statistics, the Government Statistician, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. However the only truly independent body listed is the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. A political party has questioned the Ministerial oversight and feel that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment should take charge over the reports.

The Bill was referred to the Local Government and Environment Committee and they are accepting submissions on the Bill until the end 17 April 2014.

For more information on the Bill, its implications, and assistance on making a submission contact one of our specialist [resource management team](#).

Information on the Minister's introduction of the Bill is available here
<http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/environmental-reporting-bill-introduced>

The text of the Bill is available here
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2014/0189/latest/DLM5941159.html>