

Strategy and Policy Committee

5 August 2026

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Submission on the Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill

Presenter: Naomi Crawford

[waikatoregion.govt.nz](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz)

Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING REFORM IN NEW ZEALAND

Better information. Stronger decisions. Aotearoa for the future.

1

CLEAR PURPOSE



Inform New Zealanders and support evidence-based decisions for effective and enduring environmental stewardship.

2

STRONGER REPORTING



State of the Environment reports and annual commentary reports provide timely insights on priority topics.

3

FOCUSED AND USEFUL



Focus on what matters most, with high-quality, accessible data and clear insights to support better decisions.

4

INDEPENDENT AND TRUSTED



Independent, fit-for-purpose reporting and standards, supported by strong roles and strategic advice.



BETTER EVIDENCE. BETTER DECISIONS. BETTER OUTCOMES.



Environmental Reporting Amendment Bill

- Recommends the committee approves the lodgement of the submission, subject to amendments identified in the discussion
- Will be lodged prior to 20 August 2026

Waikato Regional Energy Strategy - update on next steps

Presenter: Blair Dickie and Michelle White

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Update & next steps

- Final version of strategy published
- Strategy has been widely communicated
- Strategy will be launched on 12 August:
 - Speakers
 - Interactive session – to help shape Regional Energy Forum
 - Networking
- Aim to set up forum by December
- Forum will develop an implementation plan
- Future updates will be reported to Regional Growth and Resilience Committee

Te Rautaki Pūngao ā-Rohe o Waikato **Waikato Regional Energy Strategy**

2026-2050



Resource Management System Reform – Environmental Select Committee report back on Bills

Presenters: Lisette, Naomi, Katrina and Miffy

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A few observations to begin

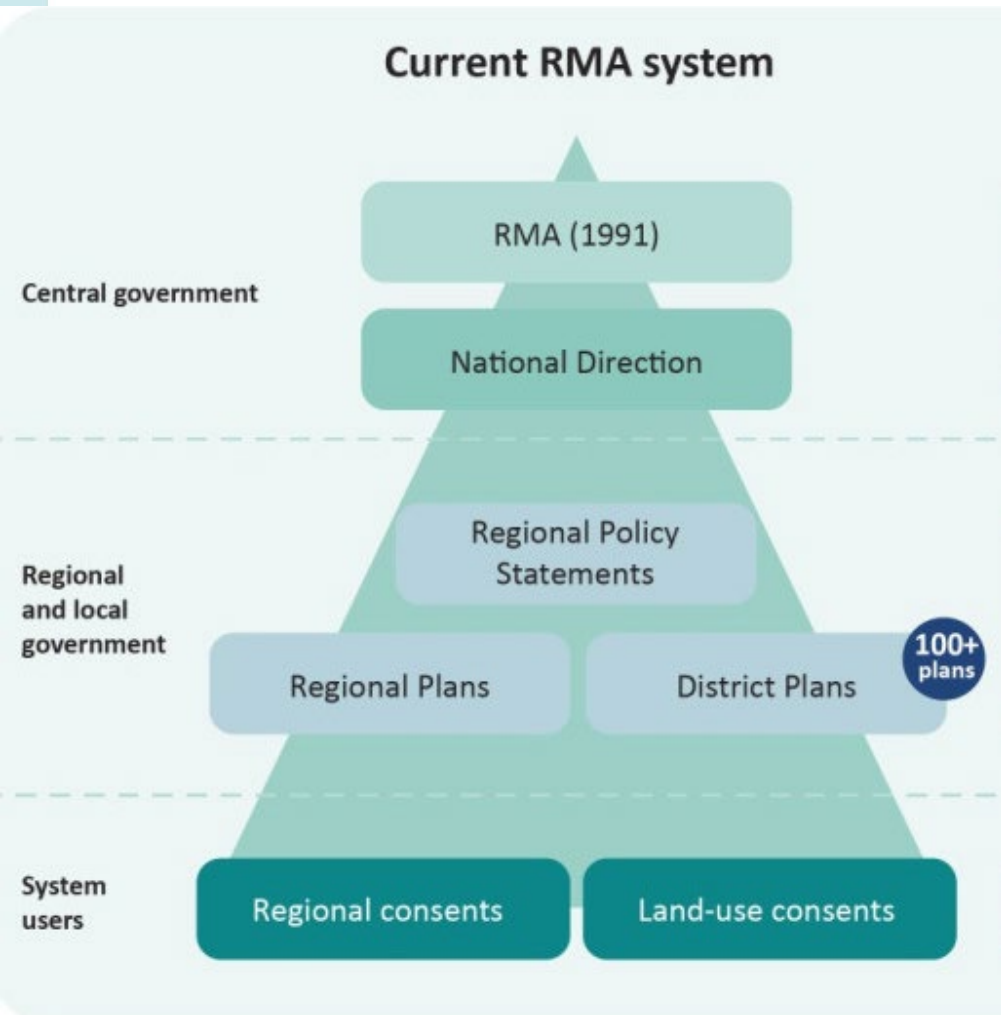
- There is an awful lot in the report back documents
- A lot still to be developed
- Rushed legislation so it does not knit together well
- Many questions (high level and of a detailed technical nature) remain unanswered, we will not have the clarity we sought
- Will be tricky managing through transition with multiple strands running at the same time
 - Existing, modified and constantly changing existing, transitional provisions, new provisions (what is turned on what is turned off)
 - Vacuum of national direction – well be developed concurrently

Few more observations

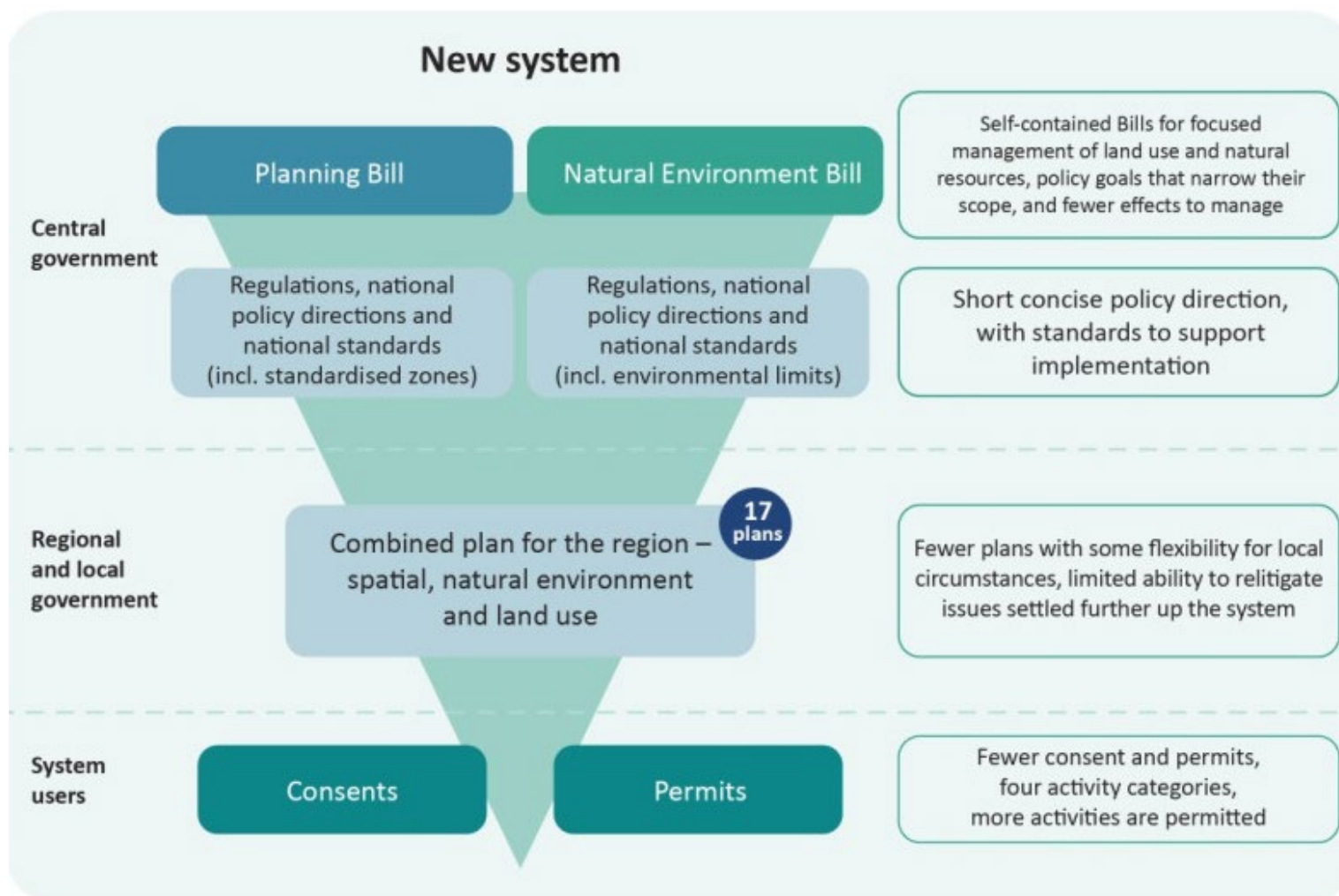
- We don't have the full picture from the start
- Uncertainty will cost, transition will cost
- Recognition of the value of 'regional' delivery
- New regional roles and responsibilities (doesn't come with funding)
- Regional spatial plan – we are one of the partners, no less/no more voice than any other local government entity
- Exercising of Ministerial powers – no commensurate compensation for what the district/region will have to pick up
- Immediate matters to attend to

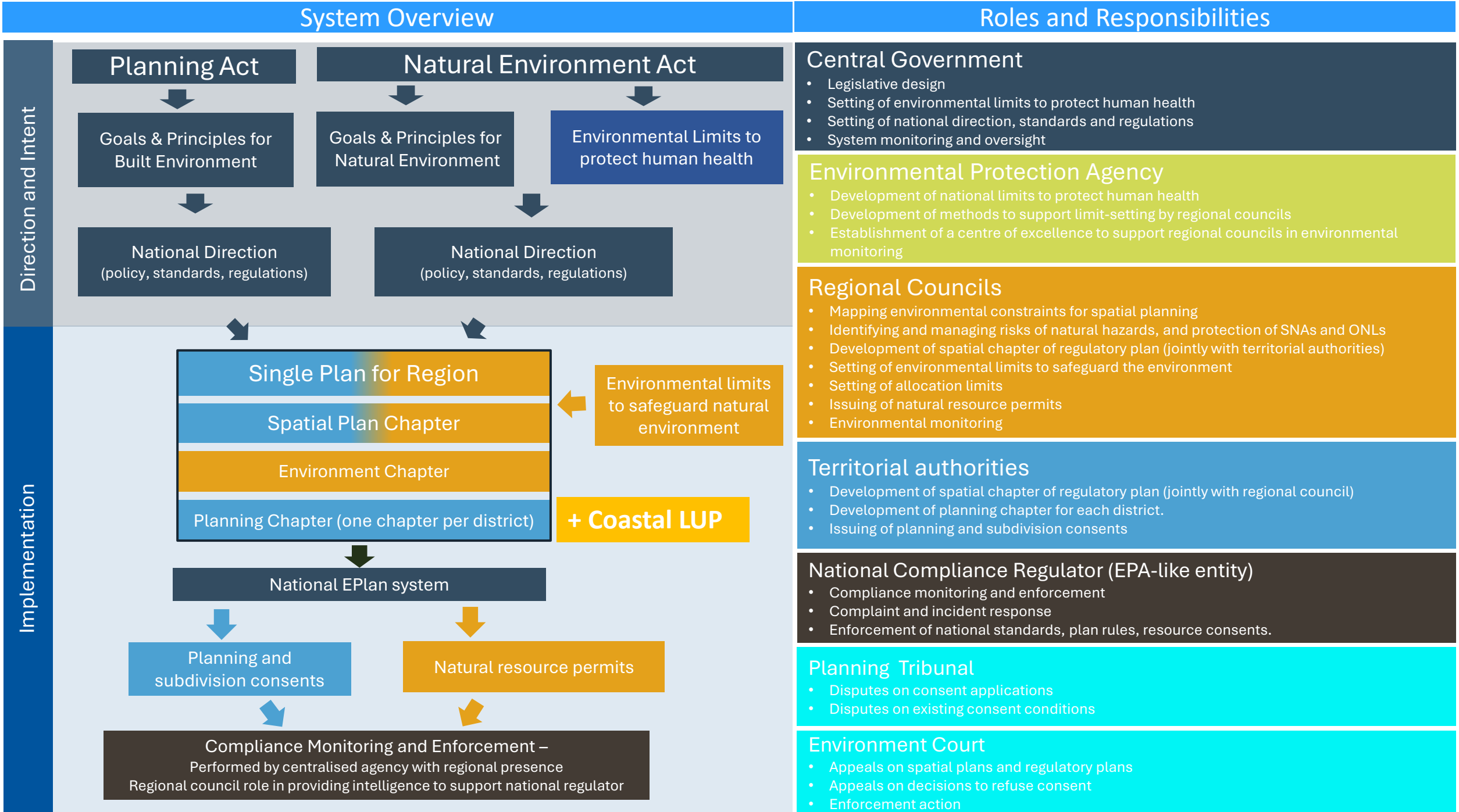
System architecture

Current RMA system



New system





Some things up front

- Overall no substantial policy changes – mostly focussed on technical and workability changes
- Second and third reading expected this week
- Expecting a number of amendment papers (aware of at least 4) so more changes to come
- Transition provisions start 1 month after royal assent
 - implications for consenting, plan making, and requirements relating to mapping highly productive land, future development strategies, housing and business development capacity (all things presently required by existing national direction)

Select committee hearing points

-  Public participation
-  Permitted activity system settings
-  Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato, equivalent effect
-  Lake Taupō nutrient management framework
-  S70/107 of the Resource Management Act - clause 32 and 164 of Natural Environment Bill

Other key submission points – slide 1

-  Council involvement in developing national instruments
-  Role of central government
-  Strong support for regional spatial planning
-  Māori involvement and definition certainty of 'equivalent effect'
-  Achievement of the goals – environmental limits

Other key submission points - slide 2



Climate change



Supporting a successful transition to the new system



Resourcing the changes



Regulatory relief regime



Integration between the Bills

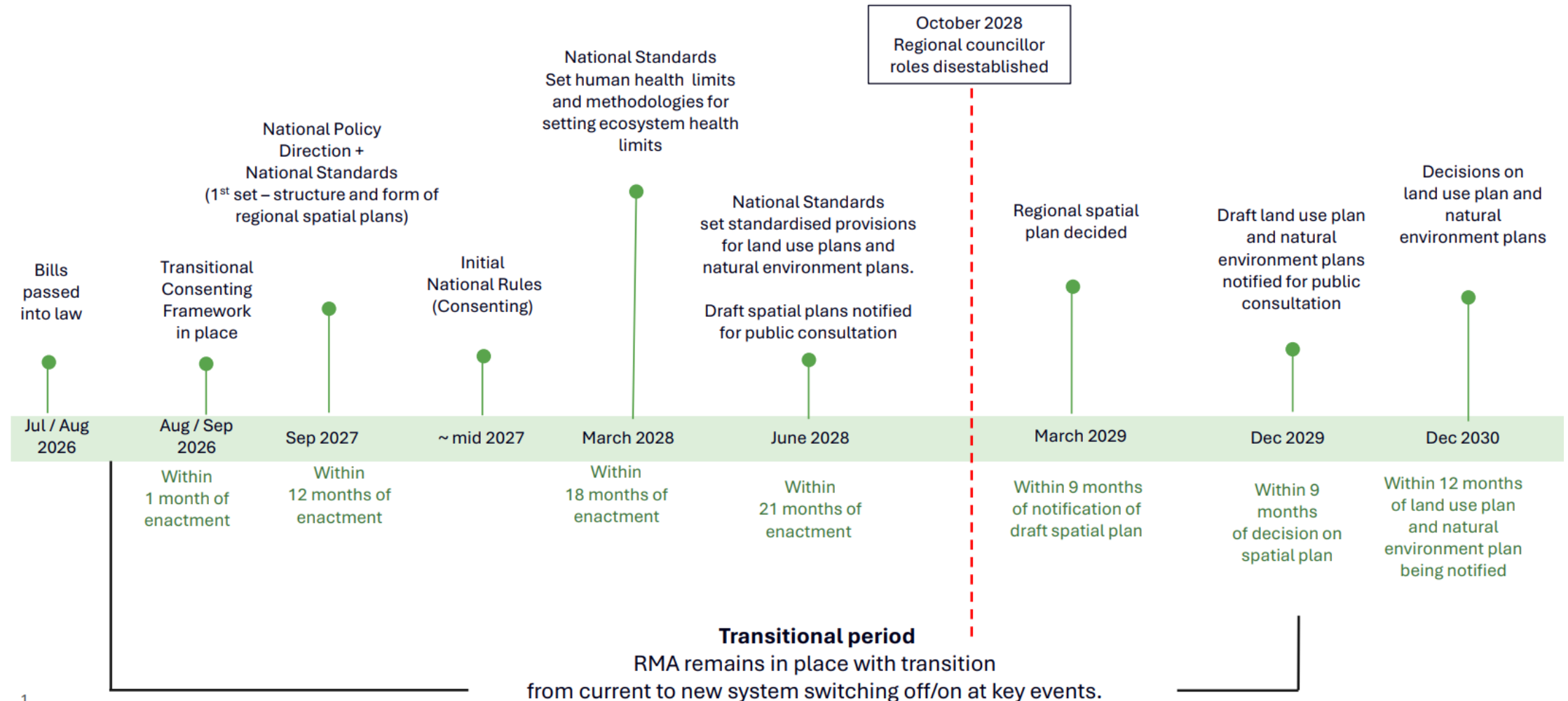
Other notable changes

- New NEB goal to support and enable enhancement of the natural environment.
- Coastal Land Use Plans to be prepared by regional councils
- First combined plans – can bring in RMA plan content (and it can't be challenged)
- Expansion of exemption to environmental limits
- Removal of other water allocation methods
- Regional councils to assess wildlife approvals

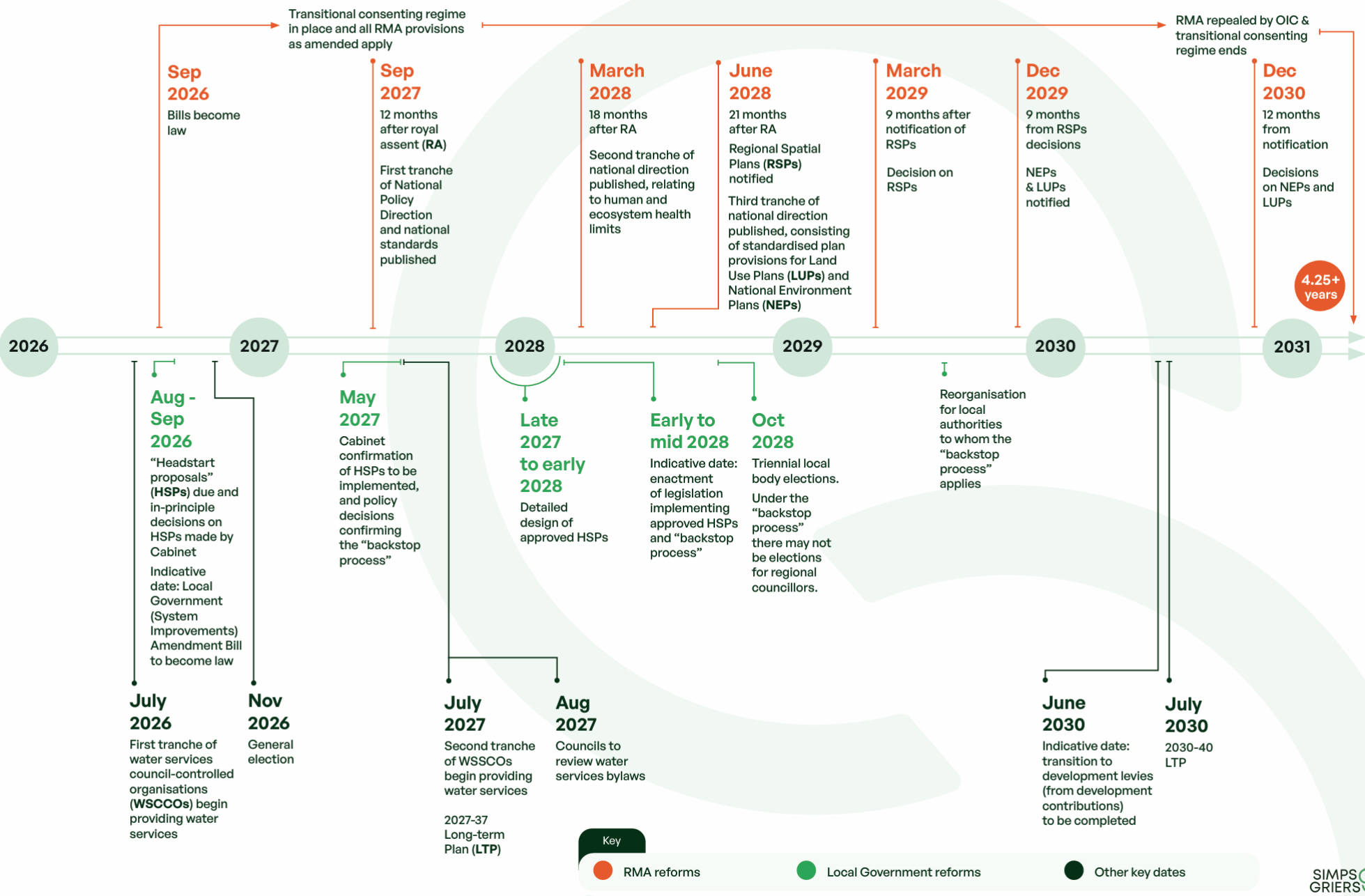
Yet more notable changes

- Freshwater Farm Plan changes
- The precautionary principle has been removed from the system
- Suspension of current requirements to:
 - map highly productive land under the NPS-HPL
 - prepare, review, implement, and update a Future Development Strategy
 - prepare a Housing and Business Development Capacity
- No change to extension of expiry dates for consents
- Controlled activities have been reinstated in the NEB

Committee Recommendations – Implementation Timelines



Timeline for RMA & Local Government Reforms



In response

- Seek to understand what it all means
- Not reinvent the wheel
- Map out what is needed
 - short(0-3), medium (3-9), long term (9-18months)
- Understand what we know (and what we don't)
- Understand new roles and responsibilities
- Put what we know into the LTP process
- Continue to fulfil ever changing statutory responsibility
- Councillor workshop on the detail

Next 7 weeks

- Second and third reading this week
- Supplementary Order Papers (3-4)
- Final reading of the Bill
- Final Review by Crown Law Office
- Royal Assent
- House rises for the election
 - (24 September)

He taiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

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