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Significant Natural Areas requirement to be suspended

**HON ANDREW HOGGARD**(/MINISTER/HON-ANDREW-HOGGARD)[Environment \(/portfolio/nationalactnew-zealand-first-coalition-government-2023-2026/environment\)](#)

Associate Environment Minister Andrew Hoggard has today announced that the Government has agreed to suspend the requirement for councils to comply with the Significant Natural Areas (SNA) provisions of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity for three years, while it replaces the Resource Management Act (RMA).

“As it stands, SNAs identified on private property limit new activities and development that can take place on that property. In their current form they represent a confiscation of property rights and undermine conservation efforts by the people who care most about the environment: the people who make a living from it,” says Mr Hoggard.

“As part of the ACT-National coalition agreement the Government committed to ceasing the implementation of new SNAs. This work will be carried out as part of the Government’s RMA reforms. For now, the Government has agreed to suspend the obligation for councils to impose SNAs under the NPS Indigenous Biodiversity, and we’re sending a clear message that it would be unwise to bother.

“The Government is proposing to make the changes as quickly as possible to ensure councils and communities do not waste resources and effort implementing national direction requirements that may change following a review.

“I have also asked for a review of the operation of existing SNAs more broadly, including those implemented under the powers that councils have in the RMA. This review is being scoped now.

“New Zealand currently has 180,000 hectares of privately-owned land in QEII covenants. The impressive engagement and growth of QEII covenants – all voluntary – shows that private landowners do care about conservation. This Government will be taking a collaborative approach with them, rather than undermining their rights.

“This Government is firmly committed to protecting New Zealanders’ property rights.

“If government takes away property rights there’s no incentive to be a conservationist. Ill-conceived regulations such as SNAs and the NPS Indigenous Biodiversity put roadblocks in place and turn biodiversity and conservation efforts into a liability.”

Note to editors:

All councils have had to protect areas with significant indigenous biodiversity since the Resource Management Act (RMA) was introduced in 1991. This requirement remains in place and isn’t affected by the suspension. Other NPSIB provisions including the management of existing SNAs will continue to apply.

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