



Strategic Intentions

2026/27 to 2030/31

Presented to the House of Representatives under section 39 of the Public Finance Act 1989

Disclaimer

The information in this publication is, according to the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport's best efforts, accurate at the time of publication. The Ministry will make every reasonable effort to keep it current and accurate. However, users of this publication are advised that:

- the information does not alter the laws of New Zealand, other official guidelines, or requirements
- it does not constitute legal advice, and users should take specific advice from qualified professionals before taking any action based on information in this publication
- the Ministry does not accept any responsibility or liability whatsoever whether in contract, tort, equity, or otherwise for any action taken as a result of reading, or reliance placed on this publication because of having read any part, or all, of the information in this publication or for any error, or inadequacy, deficiency, flaw in, or omission from the information in this publication
- all references to websites, organisations or people not within the Ministry are for convenience only and should not be taken as endorsement of those websites or information contained in those websites nor of organisations or people referred to.

This document may be cited as: Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport. 2026. *Strategic Intentions 2026/27 to 2030/31*. Wellington: Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport.

Published in September 2026 by the
Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport
PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143, New Zealand
mcert.govt.nz

ISBN: 978-1-997358-14-5

Publication number: MCERT 16

© Crown copyright New Zealand 2026

Contents

Chief Executive's foreword	4
Chief Executive's statement of responsibility	5
Responsible Minister's statement.....	5
Introduction	6
Our strategic intentions	7
High-level outcomes.....	8
Measuring progress.....	9
How MCERT works towards the outcomes	10
Our core work: roles, responsibilities and functions.....	10
Key work priorities	11
Our key relationships	12
Organisational health and capability	13
Our structure.....	13
Votes and portfolios	14

Chief Executive's foreword

The Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) was established because many of New Zealand's biggest challenges are interconnected. Planning, housing, infrastructure, transport, environmental management, emissions reduction, natural hazard resilience and local government all affect each other. Decisions in one part of the system can have major effects in another.

But the rules, institutions and funding arrangements that shape these decisions have developed separately. This has made it harder for New Zealand to take a clear, joined-up approach to places: where people live, work, travel, and build.

Bringing these responsibilities together in MCERT gives us a stronger platform to help build productive cities and regions with safe transport and durable infrastructure, support communities to thrive, and ensure the environmental health that underpins a strong economy. These outcomes are closely linked and must be pursued together.

This document sets out what we aim to contribute over the next five years. It recognises that long-standing problems will not be solved quickly or by one organisation alone. Progress will require sustained effort, collaboration and a longer-term view.

To succeed, we need to focus on taking care of the system as a whole, building the settings and tools the system needs, considering Māori interests and Treaty obligations from the start, and forming strong, lasting partnerships with local government, communities and sectors.

As a new Ministry, we are building the foundations we need to succeed. We will keep strengthening our capability, the way we work and how we measure performance, while staying focused on the outcomes we are here to influence.

The challenges ahead are significant, but so is the opportunity. By taking a more joined-up approach to planning and shaping New Zealand's places, and managing the natural systems on which they depend, we can help create the conditions for communities, the environment, and future generations to thrive.

Chief Executive's statement of responsibility



In signing this statement, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on the strategic intentions for the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport.

This information has been prepared in accordance with sections 38 and 40 of the Public Finance Act 1989).

A blue ink signature of Jeremy Lightfoot, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'L'.

Jeremy Lightfoot

Chief Executive

Ministry for Cities, Environment,
Regions and Transport

Responsible Minister's statement



I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.

A blue ink signature of Hon Chris Bishop, written in a cursive style.

Hon Chris Bishop

Responsible Minister for the Ministry
for Cities, Environment, Regions and
Transport

Introduction

Purpose of this document

This Strategic Intentions document sets out the outcomes MCERT seeks to influence, the nature of its role and responsibilities, its current areas of strategic focus over the period 2026/27 to 2030/31, and how progress will be assessed, with particular emphasis on the Ministry's foundation phase. It is deliberately concise. It provides a basis for accountability and annual reporting while recognising that the Ministry's operating model, outcomes framework and performance architecture are still being established. We will develop the Strategic Intentions further as the operating model and performance framework are settled.

The Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT)

The Ministry has been established to bring together related responsibilities across planning, transport, housing and urban development, environment, climate, and local government. These systems shape the places where people live, work, move, invest and connect. They influence New Zealand's productivity, resilience, environmental performance and long-term wellbeing.

The Ministry's purpose is:

Connecting what shapes productive places and healthy environments – now and for future generations

Functions previously carried out by four foundation agencies (Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport and the local government functions of the Department of Internal Affairs) were transferred to MCERT on 1 July 2026.

Our strategic intentions

Purpose

Connecting what shapes productive places and healthy environments – now and for future generations

Outcomes



Productive cities and regions

Places generate and sustain opportunities, growth and access



Thriving communities

People and communities are connected, supported and able to participate in and shape their futures



Healthy environments

Healthy natural systems support wellbeing, prosperity and resilience

Measuring progress



System indicators



Progress indicators



Context indicators

Our core work



Regulatory, data and institutional stewardship



Statutory, administrative, advisory and delivery responsibilities across our core portfolio (including climate, environment, planning and urban development, transport, housing and local government)

Current work programme priorities

- ▶ Planning system transformation
- ▶ Increasing housing supply
- ▶ Social housing review
- ▶ Transport system reforms

- ▶ Climate adaptation, natural hazards and resilience
- ▶ Local government and regional development work
- ▶ Evidence, monitoring and reporting work



Working in partnership with Māori, communities, local government, businesses and others to deliver better outcomes for New Zealand

High-level outcomes

The Ministry's work contributes to three high-level outcomes. These outcomes provide an organising framework for the Ministry's foundation period. There is ongoing work to articulate the change we want in the system and further develop the Ministry's performance framework. The points listed under each outcome are indicative of the changes we want to see; they will be refined, and in some cases replaced, as that framework is developed.

Our outcomes are not mutually exclusive. They overlap and blend to contribute to achieving our purpose. Many of the Ministry's activities contribute to more than one outcome.

While we have a broad range of policy, regulatory and delivery tools and levers to effect and influence change, progress towards these outcomes will also be impacted by external factors that the Ministry does not control.

Productive cities and regions

Places generate and sustain opportunities, growth and access

- Efficient, responsive urban development and infrastructure
- Abundant, affordable housing
- Safe and efficient freight networks and market connections
- Sustainable transport, housing and infrastructure funding systems
- Future-oriented planning that anticipates pressures, risks and opportunities
- Regional, sector and Māori economic growth

Thriving communities

People and communities are connected, supported and able to participate in and shape their futures

- Equitable support for those in housing need
- Māori and iwi-led solutions for hapū, whānau and communities
- Safe, accessible and reliable local transport and services
- Effective, financially sustainable local government and civic participation
- Resilient communities, marae and households

Healthy environments

Healthy natural systems support wellbeing, prosperity and resilience

- Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Lower emissions
- Less waste and pollution
- Natural systems that support resilience and adaptation

Measuring progress

The Ministry will assess progress through annual reporting against these Strategic Intentions and through the development of a more comprehensive outcomes and system performance framework. We expect the framework to include:

- System indicators, which measure whether the system is moving in the desired direction to achieve our outcomes
- Progress indicators, which measure the progress of our programmes and activities
- Context indicators, which report on contextual factors outside the Ministry's control that may have an impact on our outcomes (for example, fuel prices may impact the cost of infrastructure and housing growth).

The Ministry will report publicly on progress through its annual reports and other accountability documents while progressively strengthening its performance framework. Reporting will initially draw on existing indicators, programme milestones, evaluation material and stewardship information, where these are fit for purpose. Over time, we will continue to build on this information base and refine our indicators.

This document does not seek to establish a full outcomes hierarchy, baselines, targets or attribution model. Those elements will be developed as the Ministry's performance framework matures. We expect to revise and reissue these Strategic Intentions once that framework is sufficiently mature, rather than waiting for the standard three-year cycle.

How MCERT works towards the outcomes

The Ministry helps government make decisions on how planning, housing, transport, environment, climate and local government systems can operate effectively and work together to support better outcomes for New Zealanders. Improving how these systems function, how they interact with one another, and how decisions are informed by evidence and long-term considerations is central to achieving the outcomes set out in these Strategic Intentions.

To achieve our purpose and long-term outcomes, the Ministry draws on multiple levers, both within and across the interdependent systems in which we operate. We work at both the system level, and the regional and local level. In doing so, we give effect to the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi obligations, including settlement commitments, from the outset of our work.

A key aspect of our role is enduring stewardship: maintaining the regulatory, data and institutional foundations needed for good decisions over generations. We administer more than 70 primary Acts and numerous other legislative instruments, and are responsible for stewarding them to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Our core work: roles, responsibilities and functions

Our ongoing work in the system is fundamental to achieving the Ministry's outcomes.

The Ministry has statutory, administrative, advisory and delivery responsibilities across several connected systems:

Planning, urban development, transport and housing, including planning system settings, place-based partnerships, city and regional deals, infrastructure funding, financing and delivery, planning and managing transport networks and improving transport safety, enabling housing growth, meeting housing need and addressing homelessness.

Environment and climate, including managing natural and physical resources, supporting collection and stewardship of environmental data, assessing and monitoring environmental impacts, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and controlling and managing waste, pollution and hazardous substances.

Resilience, including planning for climate adaptation, identifying and reducing the effects of natural hazards, and building national and community resilience to natural hazards and environmental change.

Local government, including roles, functions and operations of councils and the new water services providers, local democracy and elections, council performance, and the use of Ministerial intervention powers.

Across these systems, we provide advice to Ministers, steward and administer legislation and regulation, support and administer investment and delivery of funds and programmes, maintain data and insights and monitoring functions, and work with local government, iwi and Māori, Crown entities and sector partners.

We are the host department for:

- Climate Change Chief Executives Board
- Community Housing Regulatory Authority
- Local Government Commission.

Key work priorities

Alongside its ongoing responsibilities, the Ministry is leading a significant programme of reform across the systems that shape New Zealand's cities, regions and environment, including planning, housing, transport, and local government. These priorities include:

- **planning system transformation**, including the development and implementation of a more effective resource management system, supported by digitally enabled data, processes, and reporting capabilities
- **reforms aimed at increasing housing supply**, including removing planning constraints on housing development, improving infrastructure funding and financing, and incentivising councils to plan for housing growth
- **the social housing review** and related work on improving housing investment and the delivery of services to meet housing need
- **transport system reforms**, including advice on funding, charging, investment and performance settings
- **climate adaptation, natural hazards and resilience** work, including national direction, risk information and related policy settings
- **local government and regional development** work, including support for capable institutions, regional opportunities and place-based delivery
- **evidence, monitoring and reporting** work, including improved data stewardship and developing MCERT's outcomes and performance framework.

While each priority has its own purpose, they are connected by a common goal: improving the way decisions are made about the places where people live, work, move and invest. Together, these reforms and the other core work programmes provide an opportunity to better align decisions that shape our future by supporting growth and development while protecting the natural systems that underpin New Zealand's long-term prosperity and wellbeing. Taking a more joined-up approach can help reduce fragmentation across systems, improve the coordination of planning, regulation, funding and delivery, and provide greater certainty for communities, councils, iwi, businesses and investors.

Our key relationships

Our success is highly dependent on enduring and constructive relationships. In the Ministry's foundation period it will be critical to maintain the continuity of existing key relationships.

Māori-Crown partnerships

The Ministry's Māori relationship landscape includes iwi, hapū, post-settlement governance entities (PSGEs), claimant groups, Māori organisations and providers, Māori collectives and businesses, and Māori landowners and trustees. We will maintain the relationship agreements and commitments the Ministry has inherited from its foundation agencies and, over time, develop a single, whole-of-Ministry approach to how we work with iwi and Māori.

Local government

Local government is a vital part of New Zealand's democratic framework and a key delivery partner for the Ministry. Councils, mayors, chief executives and sector collectives such as LGNZ, Taituarā (Local Government Professionals Aotearoa) and Te Uru Kahika (Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa) are valued voices.

Other key relationships

- Infrastructure and finance agencies and organisations
- Environment and social sector NGOs
- Housing and support providers
- Transport operators
- Science and academic institutions
- Industry and business
- Professional organisations

Entities we monitor

We monitor performance and advise on governance and performance expectations for a range of Crown entities and other entities, including:

- City Rail Link Limited
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Climate Change Commission
- Environmental Protection Authority
- Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities
- Maritime New Zealand
- New Zealand Transport Agency/Waka Kotahi
- Tāmaki Regeneration Company
- Transport Accident Investigation Commission
- Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai
- Auckland Light Rail Limited (being disestablished).

We also have a policy, administrative, shareholder or joint venture interest in a range of entities including, among others, airport and port companies and transport SOEs.

Organisational health and capability

During the foundation period, the Ministry will focus on building the organisational conditions needed to most effectively deliver its statutory functions and strategic priorities. This includes maintaining core capability, clarifying decision rights, supporting staff through transition, strengthening system performance capability, and developing shared ways of working across the foundation domains.

The Ministry will place particular emphasis on leadership alignment, integrated advice, trade-offs, delivery discipline, evidence and data capability (including the responsible use of AI), and constructive engagement with partners and stakeholders.

Our structure

The new Ministry's high-level organisation design is the first step in integration, designed to enable integrated advice and delivery and support collaboration. It consists of four enduring and one time-bound business groups, plus an Office of the Chief Executive. Most outcomes will need multiple groups to work together, combining evidence, policy, delivery, system tools and enabling support.

This initial design, including the number of business groups and the distribution of functions between them, is expected to change as work on the Ministry's operating model and organisational design is completed during 2026/27. The description below reflects the position at the time of publication.

System Performance sets system direction, including long-term strategies that align with Government priorities, using foresight and intelligence to understand risks and opportunities, track system progress against strategies, and drive cross-sector, outcomes-focused decisions.

Policy designs and delivers policy and regulatory advice, services and settings, translating strategy and evidence into actionable policy choices that remove barriers and integrate solutions.

Delivery designs and implements the Ministry's investment and delivery strategy through funding, partnerships, commercial and contractual arrangements; oversees Crown entities; leads the Ministry's Māori-Crown relationships and delivery.

Enabling Services delivers organisational enabling services, supporting the Ministry to perform effectively and efficiently, including supporting further integration and change.

Planning System Reform (time-bound) delivers the multi-year planning system reform programme, including policy, data and digital design and implementation, change management and programme delivery.

Votes and portfolios

The Ministry is responsible for appropriations under Vote Cities, Environment, Regions, and Transport (Vote CERT), and for appropriations still residing under Votes Environment, Housing and Urban Development, and Transport. Vote CERT includes most departmental appropriations and Local Government non-departmental appropriations. Other non-departmental appropriations remain in legacy agency Votes and will transition to Vote CERT over time.

The Ministry services the following Ministerial (and where applicable, associate Ministerial) portfolios:

- Climate Change
- Environment
- Housing
- Local Government
- Rail
- Resource Management Reform
- Transport
- Infrastructure (in respect of fast-track approvals)