

A snapshot



Te rautaki para Waste strategy

Getting rid of waste for a circular Aotearoa New Zealand



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

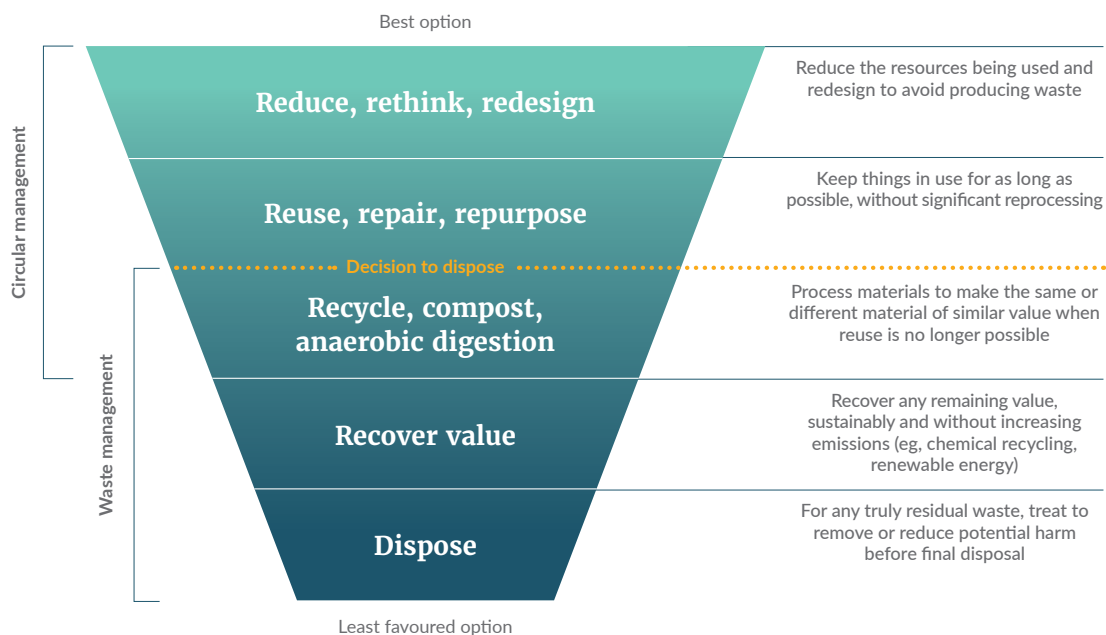
Reimagining waste: a new waste strategy for Aotearoa New Zealand

Getting rid of waste

Almost all waste is undesirable: if we have to look for a way to dispose of it, it is a waste of *something*. Modern societies extract, use and dispose of materials in unsustainable ways. Too often, we extract non-renewable resources, use them briefly – often just once – then send them to landfill.

In Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021, an average of 700 kilograms of waste per person was sent to landfill. That makes us one of the highest generators of waste per person in the OECD.

We can't keep consuming resources at the same rate or keep looking for places to bury or burn the things we don't want anymore. As the waste hierarchy outlines, it's better not to generate waste in the first place.



Reducing emissions

The way we produce, manage and dispose of things also results in greenhouse and other gas emissions. When organic material like food scraps, plant matter, paper or timber goes to a landfill, it produces methane as it breaks down.

Although methane is not the main greenhouse gas, its warming effect is 28 times greater than carbon dioxide. In 2019, waste caused around 4 per cent of New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions and around 9.1 per cent of its biogenic methane emissions.

Reducing waste reduces the depletion of limited resources, including the limited capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gas emissions.

Moving towards a circular economy

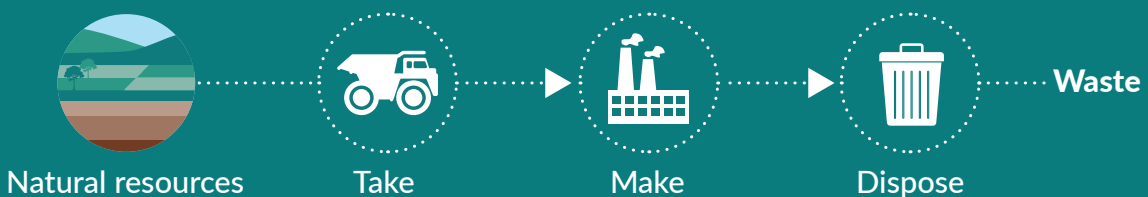
Taking natural resources, making them into something, using it and then disposing of it is referred to as a 'linear economy'. A 'circular economy' is a system where extracted materials are used and reused for as long as possible. The ideal scenario is that synthetic materials are reused forever and organic materials are eventually returned to the soil to enrich it. In a true circular economy, there is no waste.

Enriched by te ao Māori

Circular economy thinking shares many values with te ao Māori. Both focus on not creating waste in the first place and cycles of continual regeneration. In te ao Māori, the concept of whakapapa adds further richness. Whakapapa is the kinship between all living things; it exists not just between people but between people and the planet. That kinship creates connection, respect and responsibility. In this way, whakapapa gives rise to kaitiakitanga and our responsibility to actively care for our environment.

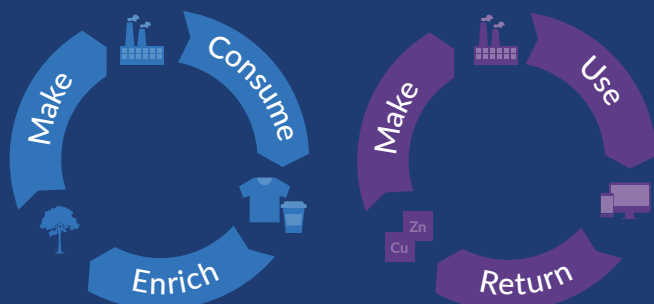
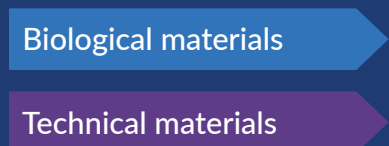
Linear economy

Technical and biological materials mixed up • Energy from finite sources



Circular economy

Energy from renewable sources



Getting rid of waste for a circular Aotearoa New Zealand: Waste strategy

Vision

By 2050, Aotearoa New Zealand is a low-emissions, low-waste society, built upon a circular economy. We cherish our inseparable connection with the natural environment, and look after the planet's finite resources with care and responsibility.

Guiding principles



Take responsibility for how we make, use, manage and dispose of things



Protect and regenerate the natural environment and its systems



Ensure our systems for using, managing and disposing of materials are financially sustainable



Apply the waste hierarchy preferences to how we manage materials



Deliver equitable and inclusive outcomes



Think across systems, places and generations

Implementation phases

Phase 1
Now to 2030

Embedding circular thinking into our systems



Phase 2
2030-40

Expanding to make circular normal



Phase 3
2040-50

Helping others do the same

Phase 1

Embedding circular thinking into our systems

By 2030, our enabling systems work well and behaviour is changing

The building blocks are in place to enable change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The strategic planning, regulatory, investment and engagement systems are in place and operating to drive and support change▶ We have a comprehensive national network of facilities supporting the collection and circular management of products and materials▶ We all take responsibility for how we produce, manage and dispose of things, and are accountable for our actions and their consequences
More activity is circular and we produce less waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ We use fewer products and materials, for longer, through increased durability, repair, reuse, sharing and repurposing▶ Resource recovery systems are operating effectively for core materials and across all regions▶ We look for ways to recover any remaining value from residual waste, sustainably and without increasing emissions, before final disposal
Emissions and other environmental impacts are improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Emissions from waste are reducing in line with domestic and international commitments▶ Contaminated land is sustainably managed and remediated to reduce waste and emissions and enhance the environment

Phase 1 targets:

Waste generation:

reduce the amount of material entering the waste management system by 10 per cent per person.

Waste disposal:

reduce the amount of material that needs final disposal by 30 per cent per person.

Waste emissions:

reduce the biogenic methane emissions from waste by at least 30 per cent.

Phase 2

Expanding to make circular normal

By 2040, circular management of materials is normal, expected, and well supported

Circular activity is widespread	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Repairing, sharing and reusing are common, and the preferred options where practicable▶ Resource recovery systems cover many materials and are easy to access▶ There is strong demand for recycled material and products▶ Aotearoa New Zealand's systems are working with others across Australia and the Pacific
Residual waste is minimal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ We are extracting the maximum value from materials and products before or during final disposal, where appropriate and sustainable▶ Residual waste has reduced to a minimum, as has the need for final disposal facilities
Emissions and other environmental outcomes keep improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Emissions from the resource recovery and waste management sector are reducing in line with domestic and international commitments▶ Plastic pollution has significantly decreased▶ Programmes to manage or remediate contaminated land and old disposal sites are well advanced

Phase 3

Helping others do the same

By 2050, New Zealand is a low-emissions, low-waste circular economy, helping others make the change

Domestic systems are as circular as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Aotearoa New Zealand's consumption of virgin resources is largely from renewable sources and has stabilised at sustainable levels▶ Regeneration is the norm and part of our circular business models
Aotearoa is contributing to regional and global networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Aotearoa is part of a regional Pacific network for circular management of materials▶ Aotearoa actively participates in international efforts to support low-emissions, low-waste circular economies
Our management of materials does not harm the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Resource recovery systems operate effectively, based on a strong understanding of carbon footprints▶ Final disposal of residual waste is minimal, as are its environmental impacts

Supporting the waste strategy with an action and investment plan

The strategy provides high-level direction. The next step is for government to work with local authorities, the waste management sector and others to develop the first action and investment plan.

The action and investment plan will spell out:

- ▶ the immediate priorities for the next five years in different geographical areas, communities, material streams and risk areas
- ▶ the mix of regulatory, investment, behaviour change, infrastructure, system change and other actions planned to address the immediate priorities
- ▶ the sequence of the actions and how they fit together
- ▶ who needs to do what.

The waste strategy and action and investment plan will then govern planning and activity across central and local government. They will also enable organisations in the waste management sector to plan their own activities. The Ministry will regularly assess, and publicly report on, progress against the strategy and action and investment plan.



We all have a part to play

Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Avoid waste and reduce what you consume▶ Embrace new recycling and reuse systems▶ Use your power as a consumer
Households and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Hire or borrow something you won't use often▶ Learn how and where to get things repaired▶ Donate or sell unwanted goods, and shop secondhand▶ Compost your food scraps and green waste at home or by using a collection service▶ Get involved in citizen science projects
Non-governmental organisations and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Keep being a catalyst for change▶ Support businesses and households to make changes▶ Create community-led initiatives, like repair hubs, swap centres and community gardens▶ Help build our national data on material flows and waste▶ Hold businesses and government to account
Businesses and industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Rethink and redesign your processes, products and packaging▶ Keep up to date with what your industry is doing to reduce waste▶ Take part in voluntary or mandatory product stewardship schemes▶ Work with local community groups and non-governmental organisations
Waste management sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Participate in implementing this strategy and make contributions to action and investment plans▶ Develop your facilities to form part of a national network for circular management of resources▶ Help develop and implement standardised regulation of the sector▶ Support the national waste data programme
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Use this strategy to develop your next waste management and minimisation plan▶ Work with other councils on new, or expanded, facilities and services▶ Support local community groups and non-governmental organisations to reduce waste▶ Link with national behaviour-change programmes▶ Factor waste management infrastructure and services into planning and consenting processes▶ Identify and manage vulnerable landfills and other contaminated sites
Central government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Connect circular economy and waste reduction goals with other plans and programmes across government▶ Be an effective leader and steward of this strategy▶ Facilitate coordination and collaboration across the sector▶ Use the government's procurement power to drive changes in market behaviour▶ Lead by example

