



**Setting Priorities**

# **ORC Compliance Plan Review**

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# Otago Regional Council Compliance Plan 2023 - 2026

## Today:

Staff seek Councillor input on the strategic elements of the Compliance Plan – the objectives and priorities. To set up this discussion, we'll cover:

- Why does ORC have a Compliance Plan, and what does it do?
- Is the Compliance Plan working?
- The review process
- How the priorities work
- Roundtable discussion on objectives and priorities

# Why does ORC have a Compliance Plan?

The Compliance Plan helps ORC focus on ‘what’s important’ in its compliance related activities.

The amount of work that ORC’s Compliance team needs to do is growing due to:

- Increases in, and intensification of, industry, farming, horticulture, infrastructure and population, and
- heightened scrutiny and expectation

Resources for meeting this growing demand are limited. There is more to do than can feasibly be done.

ORC needs to prioritise resources to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated and deployed to activities that matter most, while meeting public expectations of fiscal prudence.

# What does the Compliance Plan do?

## The compliance plan:

- **Is a high-level operational tool**, that guides allocation of workload and resources.
- **Sets objectives** for ORC's Compliance team workload management.
- **Sets priorities** for ORC's Compliance team for the next 3 years.
- **Informs** ORC's work in accordance with the RMA and the Regional Sector Strategic Compliance Framework.
- **Directs** regulatory effort toward the highest environmental risks and community impacts.
- **Provides** a transparent and consistent basis for regulatory decision-making, target-setting with Council (LTP and Annual Plans), implementing Council's Strategic actions.

**Compliance Priorities in Otago are the Plan's engine.**

# Context

The Compliance plan distills higher-level information into a form that Compliance can use to inform work planning and internal policy and procedure. The graphic below shows the range of influences. The Compliance plan not a regulatory document, so this is a useful tool rather than a hierachical arrangement.



# What doesn't the Compliance Plan do?

## The compliance plan is not:

- A strategy document
- Required by legislation or regulation (yet... though it sets us up well)
- A detailed workplan
- Strictly defining priority for individual activities
- Determining resourcing
- Setting policy or rules

For the most part, the Plan **describes** practices, rather than **defines** processes.

# Is it working?

ORC's compliance performance has improved markedly since implementing the Plan. Scorecards for Otago from National CME Metrics reports show:

- Otago's incident response rate has always been strong (100%).
- Number of consents monitored (of those requiring it) has increased from 52.3% in 2018/19 to over 100% in 2024/25 (over a national average of 75%).

# The review process

The Plan has reached the review point of its lifecycle. Given the current Plan appears to be doing its job, and impending Resource Management reform will likely have new requirements for Compliance functions, the review has looked to refine rather than reform.

A joint Policy and Compliance working group led a qualitative review, looking at:

- ORC Internal processes and strategic framework related to the Compliance Plan,
- National frameworks: Ministry for the Environment Best Practice Guidelines, the Regional Sector Strategic Compliance Framework, and Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Metrics,
- Other Regional Councils' published approaches to CME strategy and policy.

# Summary of Findings

The Plan is doing its job, but some improvements can be made:

- Operational matters: Clarify expression, purpose, and logic
- Tighten objectives
- Double check the priorities

The objectives and priorities link the Compliance plan to ORC's wider work. Staff are seeking your input to ensure the plan is properly aligned with ORC's wider goals.

# Compliance Plan strategic tools

**Objectives** are about what the Plan is for and what ORC is trying to achieve with it as an internally facing document.

**Priorities** are used to prioritise compliance monitoring activities, and determining monitoring frequency and the right approach to incidents.

Staff have addressed these elements as part of the review, and proposed some changes, as set out in the attached materials.

# A note on Priorities

- Priority 1 represents the highest risk activities, based on a risk assessment (likelihood and consequence of adverse impacts). Higher priority activities are addressed first in work planning and allocation, though activities under all priorities get their place in the workplan.
- The priorities are a starting point for assessing activities' risk level. In practice, the attention given to a specific site or incident will depend on factors like compliance history, scale of the activity, environmental sensitivity, community interest, and others based on Compliance Team experience.
- Clearly structured and justified work planning means that consent holders and those undertaking permitted activities have:
  - Greater certainty about monitoring schedules
  - Access to justification for how monitoring is structured
  - Assurance that the effort they put into compliance is recognised, and that non-compliance will be addressed.

# The current priorities

- Priority 1: Reduce non-compliant discharges to improve freshwater quality
- Priority 2: Proactive and integrated approach to monitoring large-scale activities
- Priority 3: Monitor water takes and use to protect water quantity
- Priority 4: Monitor structures and works in and adjacent to freshwater
- Priority 5: Reduce non-compliant air discharges to improve air quality
- Priority 6: Monitor coastal structures and oil spill preparedness

Each priority has an associated description and list of activities in the Plan

**Priority 1:**  
**E.g: Earthworks in the Queenstown Lakes District are significant in scale**



# If poorly managed, these sites risk discharging sediment into stormwater & local waterways



# Priority 2:

E.g: District Council wastewater treatment plants - system failures can occur, resulting in unauthorised environmental discharges.

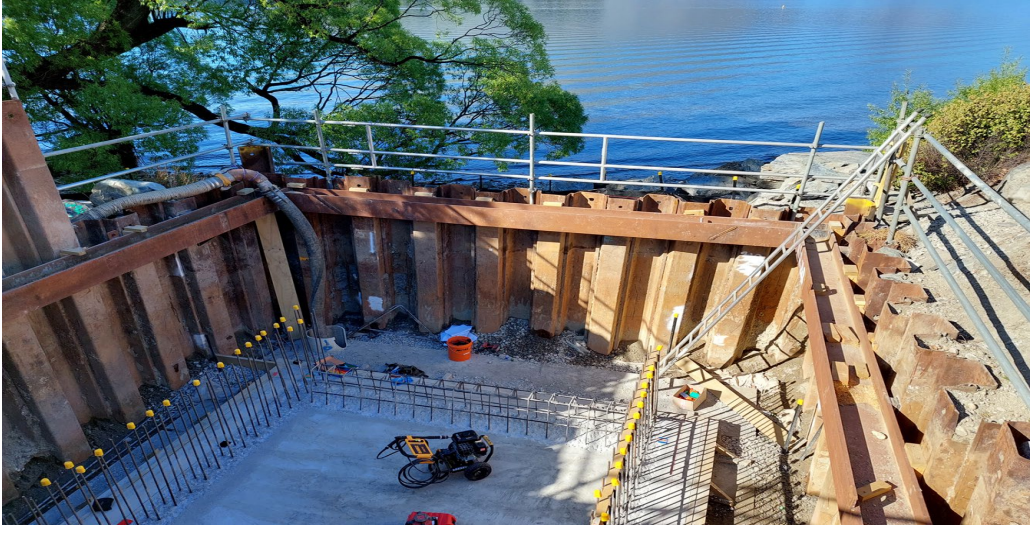


# Priority 3: We monitor water takes and use to protect water quantity



# Priority 4: We monitor structures and works in and adjacent to freshwater

Structures in rivers can obstruct fish passage and impact habitat, particularly for migratory species – fish passage, Taieri River



# Priority 5: Reduce non-compliant air discharges to improve air quality



## Priority 6: Non-compliant coastal structures and activities in the coastal environment can affect habitats and coastal amenity.



# Any questions?

Before we move on to the workshop activity, do you have any further questions about how the priorities were developed, what they're for, or anything else about the Compliance Plan and its relationship to Compliance work?

# Prioritisation in practice

Imagine you are a compliance officer. You've got two pieces of work to do, and only have the time to attend to one of them.

Which do you choose?

We will present you with competing pairs of scenarios that require attention. Pick the one you would attend.

After each comparison, we'll look at how you have prioritised each scenario and discuss why you've come to that conclusion.

Log in to the exercise on Mentimeter here [link to be provided at the workshop]

# Roundtable discussion

## See additional materials

The remainder of the session is an opportunity to discuss proposed changes to the objectives and priorities.

Focus questions:

- Do you prefer the current wording or the proposed wording?
- Whichever you prefer, is there something missing, or another change needed?
- Is the order of priorities correct?

# Wrap up

Staff will:

- Use your feedback to revise the objectives and priorities in the Plan.
- Make some further revisions to improve the flow and logic of the plan, based on feedback and analysis from the review process.
- Provide a revised copy of the compliance plan for consideration at the August Council session.

Any further questions or comments?



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**Kia ora!**

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