

Fisheries Act Amendments 2026: Additional ACE Carry-Forward

The issue

Under current settings ACE expires at the end of the fishing year even if it isn't caught due to events unrelated to sustainability (e.g. fuel supply constraints, market collapse).

A maximum of 10% of unfished ACE can be carried forward to the next fishing year.

This can result in lost economic opportunity despite there being no sustainability concern.

The proposal

The Bill would allow Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) carry-forward in excess of current regulatory limits in exceptional circumstances such as severe weather, biotoxin closures, or significant market shocks. Applications for additional carry forward by owners of at least 75% of quota shares would be considered for approval by the Director General of MPI.

The change is intended to improve flexibility in the fisheries management system – specifically the timeframe over which the sustainable limit can be caught.

Does this increase catch?

No. Additional carry-forward does not create new catch. It allows a proportion of unused ACE from one year to be caught in the next.

Over two years, total catch cannot exceed two years of TACC. This proposal changes the timing of harvest, not the total amount of harvest or the sustainability limit.

Sustainability remains protected

The provision operates within already established sustainable limits. Sustainability continues to be managed through:

- Sustainable catch limit settings
- Existing prohibition on carry-forward after a catch limit reduction
- Consideration of biological risk in approval process

Our position

We support the intent of the proposal. With appropriate safeguards, this is a low-risk, targeted tool that improves flexibility while maintaining strong sustainability protections.

We consider some improvements are needed to ensure the provision is effective. Specifically, the decision-making process and criteria need to be practical and proportionate to the actual risk to sustainability