

Media Release from Water New Zealand re National Infrastructure Plan

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Water infrastructure needs closer attention

Water New Zealand agrees with Treasury's findings that New Zealand's water infrastructure needs much closer attention. The National Infrastructure Plan released today compares the needs of the five main infrastructure sectors with water requiring the most focus of all.

"Treasury says that water governance, management and regulation need the closest attention over the next three years, and we could not agree more, said Water New Zealand's chief executive, Murray Gibb.

"We are not surprised at the findings in the report. The current policy settings, institutions and regulatory tools for water infrastructure were put in place many years ago and are well overdue for review," he said.

"The report quite correctly points to the competing interests facing local bodies, and a lack of alignment between national objectives and local funding and accountability. This was reinforced by the annual report on drinking water released last week which quantified the gap between current performance and meeting drinking water quality standards," he said.

"The National Infrastructure Plan points to the lack of good information available on the current state of urban water assets. As so tragically found in the Christchurch Earthquakes, these assets are largely buried underground out of sight, and often out of mind. Assessment of these assets is consequently difficult, in comparison with obvious assets, such as roads and power networks.

"Hopefully, recent changes to the Local Government Act should improve performance in these areas. These include requirements around reporting on the actual and planned cost of urban water services and consistent performance measures so that service levels can be compared between communities."

"When these and other reforms currently in the pipeline are implemented Water New Zealand is confident that the performance of the sector will improve," Mr Gibb said.

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Water New Zealand

Water New Zealand is an independent not for profit association of water professionals and organisations. It is the country's largest water industry body, providing leadership and support in the water sector through advocacy, collaboration and professional development. Members are drawn from all areas of the water management industry including regional

councils and territorial authorities, consultants, suppliers, government agencies and scientists. See www.waternz.org.nz for more information.