

Media Release
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Conservation Authority Recommendations Supported

The Conservation Authority has hit the nail on the head with its recommendation that there be one agency in charge of New Zealand's rivers. More centralised leadership in managing water is strongly supported by Water New Zealand says chief executive, Murray Gibb.

He was commenting on the Conservation Authority report on the state of New Zealand's rivers released yesterday.

"Other western developed countries have a minister in charge of water and one government department with overall responsibility. In New Zealand we have nine government departments with an interest in water and none have any overall responsibility," Mr Gibb explained.

"On top of that resource management responsibilities have been devolved to 11 regionally based regulators of water. Over the last two decades these agencies have been left to steer their own course, largely without central direction, and water quality has consequently declined," he said.

"Furthermore, there are 67 suppliers of reticulated water services sitting below these regional councils."

Mr Gibb said that this adds up to 87 central and local government businesses providing water services for 4.4 million people.

"This is a cumbersome governance system by any standard for a small country and we are pleased to see the Conservation Authority making a call for more leadership at the top."

"The recommendation for a national strategic approach to rivers echoes a similar recommendation from the Land and Water Forum for water overall. Our abundant water gives New Zealand a competitive advantage in an increasingly resource constrained world, so it makes sense to take a strategic approach to its management."

"Water management affects everyone. It is a complex business and the first step to getting it right is starting at the top by getting the right governance and strategies in place," Mr Gibb said.

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