

Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Minister of Local Government



20 November 2018

PĀNUI PĀPĀHO
MEDIA STATEMENT

Wellbeing and Water – a necessary conversation with Local Government

The Government has announced plans to initiate a strategic conversation with Local Government about community well-being and proposals to overhaul the regulation of water. Led by Minister of Local Government Nanaia Mahuta, the multi-agency Three Waters Review has been investigating the state and performance of New Zealand’s drinking water, wastewater and storm water systems.

“Equally important is the need to engage our Councils and Central Government in what we can do collaboratively to enhance wellbeing through regional growth, strengthening the role of our communities and engaging the potential of our young people – essential to that will be the challenge of our waters infrastructure,” said the Hon Nanaia Mahuta.

The Cabinet paper *Local governance for community well-being* can be found at: www.dia.govt.nz/Central-Local-Government-Partnership and the Cabinet paper *Future state of the three waters system: regulation and service delivery* can be found at: www.dia.govt.nz/three-waters-review

‘It’s important to initiate the conversation about how Central and Local Government can contribute, enhance and support the types of expectations that communities seek around environmental stewardship, urban planning and place-making, public services and amenities, housing and community development and intergenerational wellbeing,’ said Nanaia Mahuta.

“We also need to address the issues creating pressure and impacting on Council balance sheets and that’s the burgeoning cost of waters infrastructure as citizens seek higher assurance about safe, reliable drinking water and higher environmental expectations around urban and freshwater.

“Our three waters system faces critical funding and capability challenges in delivering this. With pressures such as aging infrastructure, population changes, increased tourism numbers and the need to build in resilience against climate change and natural events, the situation will get much worse if we do not address it.

“We are advancing policy work towards new regulatory arrangements to ensure drinking water safety and reduce environmental damage and contamination from wastewater. Along with my colleagues the Minister of Health and Minister for the Environment, I expect to take detailed proposals on the shape and form of the arrangements to Cabinet in June 2019.

“We need to have the right conversation about the future of local government and three waters reform. I acknowledge that there remains anxiety about ‘three waters’ service delivery but I want to encourage those in the sector who are already working towards improved service delivery that we want to engage.

“I have made it clear to the sector that my work programme will develop high-level service delivery options for further consideration. This will not be done in a vacuum and we will engage the sector. I have also said on numerous occasions that continued public ownership of water assets is our bottom line.

“It’s important to lift the focus on to the real challenges facing us as we consider strategic opportunities to strengthen the role of local government in delivering prosperity and well-being for our communities,” said Nanaia Mahuta.