

## **Watercare releases climate change strategy**

How do we ensure Aucklanders continue to receive safe and reliable water and wastewater services despite the effects of climate change?

Watercare's newly-released Climate Change Strategy addresses the effects of a changing climate and contributes towards our strategic priority to become fully sustainable. It provides direction to staff and contractors about adapting to climate change and reducing emissions.

Climate change effects can include temperature increases, drought, increased frequency of severe storm events and rising sea levels. Every aspect of our operations is potentially impacted by these effects from the planning and design of our infrastructure, to the way raw water is sourced and treated, or how wastewater is processed and discharged.

Watercare chief executive, Raveen Jaduram says climate change resilience must be taken seriously: "Climate change is undoubtedly one of the largest challenges we face as a country, a business and as people today.

"Designing a resilient infrastructure programme to keep up with Auckland's growth, which includes planning and designing assets with up to a 100-year lifecycle is a challenge but one the organisation is embracing, along with an ambitious carbon reduction programme.

"We are challenging ourselves to think differently about the way we work."

Watercare's Climate Change Strategy bases its planning on NIWA's *Auckland region climate change projections and impacts* report. It also recognises that Watercare has a part to play in taking responsibility for reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions e.g. methane and nitrous oxide produced from wastewater treatment and carbon dioxide from the energy (gas and electricity) used to run our treatment facilities and pump stations.

Watercare's climate change journey began in 2003 with significant upgrades at the Māngere Wastewater Treatment Plant, reducing the organisations total GHGs by 80%. The organisation's GHGs have been publicly reported for more than 10 years.

This strategy provides a consolidated company-wide approach which will continue to evolve. A number of activities have already been initiated including:

- Revegetation programme in the Hunua Ranges (140,000 native trees planted so far. Around 8 million trees will be planted over the next 30 years)
- Solar power pilot schemes at a pump station near Pukekohe Wastewater Treatment Plant, Redoubt Rd water reservoir and Wellsford Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Conversion of 30% of pool fleet cars to electric vehicles
- Commitment to energy neutrality at major wastewater treatment plants through energy generation from biogas, plus 2025 target for energy neutrality at Māngere and Rosedale WWTPs

Watercare's head of sustainability, Chris Thurston, says he is proud of the work the virtual climate change team has done since late 2017 to develop the strategy: "We have involved our people since the beginning, starting with vulnerability workshops to understand the potential impacts on our assets and service delivery. The commitment from within the business as well as the executive and the Board demonstrates how important this issue is.

"We are committed to taking leadership and will aim to do our bit to keep global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is an exciting and challenging journey and we have now put a line in the sand."

The strategy sets out the future direction for Watercare as it embarks on a journey to operate a low carbon organisation that is resilient to climate impacts. The strategy also enacts Watercare's climate change policy which communicates to staff and suppliers what is expected of them to contribute to our climate change objectives each year.

The strategy includes the following targets:

- NetZero emissions by 2050
- Reduce operational greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent by the year 2030
- Reduce infrastructure build emissions by 40 per cent by the year 2025

The strategy highlights 14 portfolios of work that focus on meeting the mitigation and adaptation goals. These range from updating climate modelling to understanding treatment resilience and planting and carbon sinks.

Watercare has written its strategy to sit alongside Auckland's Auckland Climate Action Plan (ACAP) being coordinated by Auckland Council.

Watercare are also a signatory to the climate leader's coalition, a group of 82 companies across New Zealand who are committed to measuring and reporting their greenhouse gas emissions, setting targets and working with suppliers to reduce emissions.

Ends.

*Jpeg: Watercare's Māngere Wastewater Treatment Plant*

*PDF: Watercare climate change graphic*

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