



## WATER NEW ZEALAND

Water New Zealand is the industry body for the three waters sector – drinking water, wastewater and stormwater. We advocate and promote the sustainable management of the water environment and in particular, the three waters through supporting members, and engaging with key partners and stakeholders.

We are thought leaders providing independent technical advice and data, workforce training, and delivering and enabling knowledge-sharing across the sector. We are the “go-to” advisor for three waters sector.

Our membership consists of approximately 2300 decisionmakers and technologists from local and central government, industry, the academic and research communities, consultants and service/equipment and supply organisations.

We work closely with members and partners to ensure a sustainable, long term approach to water management and are looking forward to supporting the sector as they give effect to Te Mana o te Wai and the Treaty of Waitangi.

## THREE WATERS REFORM

We strongly support your Government’s approach to three waters reform and the goal that every community in the country should have access to safe drinking water. We strongly urge a consistent national oversight of waste and stormwater and the recognition of the connection that freshwater and source water have on the overall health of water in New Zealand. That is why we commend your Government for the strong, visionary leadership around water and the direction of the water reforms.

## DRINKING WATER REGULATOR & WATER SERVICES BILL

We support the establishment of Taumata Arowai and have been working with the establishment unit and our members to support a smooth transition to the new regulatory environment. Recently we hosted a full-day workshop at our annual conference where establishment CEO Bill Bayfield and his team discussed key issues with more than 200 members and industry professionals who attended the day-long event.

We have been working on a comprehensive submission on the Water Services Bill and have put considerable effort into ensuring our membership view is represented. This has involved significant consultation with our wider membership as well as the establishment of a working group of technical advisers to help ensure the legislation is workable and supports the government’s goals.

## LIFTING WORKFORCE CAPABILITY & TRAINING

One of the biggest challenges facing the three waters sector is the big gap in capacity and competency in our workforce. That is why Water New Zealand has prioritised several major new initiatives aimed at lifting capability and capacity in the workforce.

This will require co-ordination and support from across the education and vocation sectors and in particular, the Government. It will be necessary for us to seek funding and partnership support to ensure the success of these programmes and the reform process.

We need to be assured that all organisations responsible for managing and operating drinking, waste and stormwater have the right skills and expertise.

### COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

As an industry organisation, Water New Zealand has been taking this seriously. We are developing a competency framework which will describe what people should be able to do and what they need to know to competently undertake their work.

This is the first step towards an upskilled, fit-for-purpose workforce. It is intended to help the water industry to identify the knowledge and skills required by their workforce, to help assess levels of staff training that may be required and to develop training programmes.

### PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

Alongside our partner organisation, WIOG (Water Industry Operations Group), we have established a professional registration scheme for water industry professionals (WIPA). We would like to see mandatory registration of water industry professionals.

### ATTRACTING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TO THE SECTOR

As well as a skills shortage, the water sector has a looming problem of an ageing workforce. We are embarking on a campaign aimed at encouraging more young people into the sector. We intend to highlight the advantages of working in what will be a dynamic, challenging, and exciting sector.

## TE MANA O TE WAI

Water New Zealand is currently working on a guide to assist members in relation to what giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai means for them. This will also involve training to enable members to understand the concept and how it relates to the way they undertake their work.

Recently we ran a webinar for members and wider stakeholders on Māori Worldviews, Climate and Carbon Pathways. This proved to be our most popular online event ever, with more than 500 registrations and almost 250 people joining the live discussion.

## NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Water New Zealand produces an annual performance comparison of drinking water, wastewater and stormwater service provision in New Zealand. This provides robust data on the state of the water infrastructure, the performance of the water services providers and is an important tool for providing a national oversight on the state of the sector.

The National Performance Review is our flagship technical document. However, we produce a number of other important technical documents and papers to support the sector.

## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Other key issues include the cost of infrastructure and ongoing maintenance. During COVID-19 the ongoing issue of pipes blockages, caused by the flushing of non flushable products, was of significant concern for councils. It is conservatively estimated that it costs local government in New Zealand \$16-m a year in unblocking pipes due to blockages caused by wipes.

This has been an issue that we have been liaising with both MfE and MBIE on. We are also working with our Australian partners on the development of new Australian/New Zealand Flushability Standards aimed at enforcing correct labelling on wipes products.

---

### We look forward to working with you

Our goals around safe, clean and healthy water are aligned with your government's policies and objectives. As the leadership organisation for the three waters sector, we are in a strong position to support you engage and communicate with our members as we continue the reform process.

We look forward to an ongoing professional and productive relationship during your second term of government.

Gillian Blythe  
Chief Executive, Water New Zealand  
[gillian.blythe@waternz.org.nz](mailto:gillian.blythe@waternz.org.nz)

