

Oral submission to Health Committee: Water Services Bill – 17 March 2021

Morena

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of the Committee.

Water NZ is a not-for-profit industry body, with members throughout the water sector.

Water NZ supports the intent of this legislation. While we have made a number of technical submissions this bill represents an important step change in the regulation of drinking water in New Zealand.

We would like to make three points.

Slide 2 illustrates drinking water compliance at a national level for a range of different supplier sizes. This is Ministry of Health data. As you can see compliance varies, and the trend has not improved significantly over the last decade.

Slide 3 shows this, in perhaps, more stark terms. This is 2019 Ministry of Health data.

On the left

- 63% of New Zealanders receive drinking water that is compliant with Drinking Water Standards.
- 20% of the population receive known non-compliant drinking water.
- 17% of the population receive drinking water of an unknown standard.

On the right, again 2019 data.

- 78% of our team of 5 million receive water that complies with the bacteria standard.
- 5% receive water that is known to not comply with the bacteria standard. This means either there is Ecoli in the water, or the supplier has not done sufficient tests to meet minimum Drinking Water requirements. Ecoli is an indicator that the water has been contaminated by fecal matter.
- 17% of the population receive water where the bacteria contamination level is unknown.

Slide 4

Water NZ supports greater regulatory scrutiny of both wastewater and stormwater, including scrutiny of small on-site wastewater systems.

Drinking water is just one part of the water cycle.

Fundamentally water is water, wai is wai. Without greater scrutiny, public health and the health of the environment will continue to be at risk.

Finally, to close. Clause 161 provides an exemption to elected officials.

Water NZ has members who are water sector employees and who will have duties under this bill. They will be required to exercise due diligence and be subject to fines when they do not. Yet elected officials who will ultimately make the financial expenditure decisions are exempt. We appreciate that there are precedents for this, but Water NZ would like to draw your attention to the extraordinary position our members will be in.

Thank you, happy to take questions.