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Media Statement

Water New Zealand Announces Stepped Up Strategy on World Water Day

Water New Zealand is the national organisation that provides industry leadership for the best practice management of the 3 waters assets – drinking water, storm water and waste water. We have membership from a wide range of organisations including Local and Regional councils, consultants, contractors and suppliers, and deliver a wide variety of technical advice to the industry by way of guidelines and practice notes.

Through a variety of events, we facilitate a collaborative learning environment across the sector and organise a major water conference every year attended by around 1000 people who work in the sector. We also organise specialist conferences on topics such as storm water and hydraulic modelling of water systems.

Some key current and ongoing initiatives are:

- development of national data standards – basically establishing a national framework for how Councils will measure and report on the water assets they own. We are very supportive of this initiative and will be looking to work with Local Government to promote their uptake by local Councils
- an annual benchmarking exercise where we ask councils to contribute information so we can compare their performance in the delivery of water services. While not all councils are yet participating in this process, it enables us to identify areas for improvement in the management of water assets. Driving progress toward councils adopting good practice in everything they do is an essential part of what we do
- we are also advocating the development of nationally consistent rainfall and runoff guidelines to enable catchment and flood planning for infrastructure on a common framework.

The Government is concerned that the wide variety of approaches to water asset management currently being used by Councils places the country at risk, both financially and from a technical standpoint, given that Councils manage more than \$45b of water assets. The wise management of NZ's freshwater is also seen as being critical from both an environmental and economic perspective.

To meet these challenges, Water New Zealand has developed a new ambitious stepped-up strategy. The key goals of our new strategy are:

- in 3 years; there is a consistent approach across the 3 Waters sector
- in 5 Years: we are the national spokesperson and standard-setter on water issues.

Water New Zealand aims to deliver these goals through:

- a re-invigorated environment for collegial learning across the sector and leadership in technical excellence
- an increased effort on relationship building across the sector to facilitate collaboration
- advocacy and promotion of New Zealand best practice
- leadership in joining up the Water Sector.

Information on World Water Day

World Water Day is an international observance and an opportunity to learn more about water-related issues, be inspired to tell others and take action to make a difference. World Water Day dates back to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development where an international observance for water was recommended. The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day. It has been held annually since then. Each year the UN sets a theme for World Water Day corresponding to a current or future challenge. This year the theme is “Better Water, Better Jobs”.

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