



Water Services Authority
Taumata Arowai

The next phase of water services regulation

Ensuring your decisions are made with the best regulatory evidence, national comparators, clear pathways, and transparent cost signals available.





Who we are, and how we work

01

Regulation Setting and enforcing the requirements that protect public health and environmental performance.

02

Sector leadership Shaping expectations, building capability and leading improvement across the water services sector.

03

System oversight Providing an independent, whole-of-system view of performance, emerging risks and where action is needed.

Your Board is inheriting a baseline position. The trajectory you set from here will determine outcomes over the next decade.



THE REGULATORY SYSTEM YOU ARE NOW PART OF

An enduring system, shared across regulators

The sector is moving from a policy-led transition programme to an enduring regulatory model, now shared across three regulators: the Authority, the Commerce Commission, and regional councils as consent authorities. The Authority exercises its national leadership through its regulatory role, and its regulatory record spans every supply and network.

Water Services Authority

Regulation, sector leadership, system oversight.

MCERT

Policy, legislation and system stewardship for local government and water services.

Commerce Commission

Economic regulation, pricing and consumer protection.

Regional councils & unitaries

Environmental regulation as consent authorities, now implementing national standards as consent conditions.

The Authority's statutory objectives

Safe water, every day for everyone.

01

Protect and promote drinking water safety and related public health outcomes

02

Effectively administer the drinking water system

03

Build and maintain capability among drinking water suppliers and across the wider industry

04

Develop and administer National Engineering Design Standards for network infrastructure

05

Oversight of and advice on the regulation, management, and environmental performance of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater networks

06

Promote public understanding of the environmental performance of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater networks



PREPARING FOR ESTABLISHMENT

The decisions to prepare for now

These are the decisions to prepare for ahead of establishment on 1 July 2027, so the organisation is ready from day one. Our engagement is designed to ensure they are made on accurate regulatory information.

Baseline and risk

Rapidly understanding the risk profile of the assets to be inherited on establishment, and having confidence in the management plans in place if something goes wrong, on assets built and maintained by others.

Water Services Strategy

Your first Water Services Strategy is required from 1 July 2027, the day the organisation is established, so it must be substantially prepared during transition. It will set the improvement trajectory and capital programme for the decade, including what to commit to and the risk that deferral carries.

Cost and accountability

Weighing affordability against the cost of compliance. What can communities reasonably pay? What are the opportunities that standardised consenting and compliance pathways present?



HOW WE REGULATE, AND HOW WE SUPPORT

Regulation and support under a single statutory mandate

REGULATION

Our approach is transparent, risk-based, and proportionate. We escalate only as risk and performance require, from voluntary to enforced.

What to expect

The level of regulatory involvement is calibrated to risk and performance: organisations demonstrating voluntary compliance can expect monitoring with minimal intervention, while persistent or deliberate non-compliance will see a more directive or enforced response.

In determining the appropriate level of engagement, the Authority has regard to the size and complexity of the supply, the level of risk to public health and the environment, the organisation's compliance history, and its willingness to engage and improve.

The Authority is also reviewing and clarifying its regulatory guidance, including through its Guidance Design Hub, to remove ambiguity for councils and operators implementing Local Water Done Well.

Key contact: Neil Shaw— Manager Water Services (North)

SUPPORT

Guidance, tools, data, national comparators and transparent cost signals – as regulatory inputs to support decision making.

What to expect

The Authority will provide direct engagement on:

- the National Engineering Design Standards and associated codes of practice
- the second tranche of wastewater standards
- the Infrastructure Design Solutions programme
- cost benchmarking for infrastructure investment, including water meter installation.

The Authority also publishes the Drinking Water Regulation Report and the Network Environmental Performance Report annually, providing national performance data and comparators.



THE REGULATORY PROGRAMME

What is in place, and what is coming

IN EFFECT / 2025-28

Compliance, Monitoring, Enforcement Strategy 2025-28

Water Organisations must fully comply with the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules 2022 and the Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand, manage risk, and build a strong culture of drinking water safety.

What this means for you

Full compliance by 2028 is a fixed regulatory requirement. Board oversight of your compliance and risk pathways are critical.

IN EFFECT / DEC 2025

Wastewater Environmental Performance Standards

The first tranche of national wastewater environmental performance standards is in force, standardising wastewater consent limits nationally. The standards apply at the point a plant seeks a new consent or renews an existing one, with a transition window in place until August 2028.

What this means for you

Meeting the standards at each reconsenting event may require increased capital investment than what was included in WSDPs. This needs to be factored into your Water Services Strategy.

IN DEVELOPMENT

National Engineering Design Standards & Codes of Practice

NEDS and national codes of practice are being introduced to reduce fragmentation and support standardised, cost-effective infrastructure design.

What this means for you

NEDS sets mandatory national performance requirements for water infrastructure; the code of practice offers a pre-approved, lower-cost way to meet them. Both are designed to reduce cost in your capital delivery programme through standardisation.

IN DEVELOPMENT

Wastewater Standards Tranche 2 & Infrastructure Design Solutions

Tranche 2 wastewater standards are progressing toward public consultation. The Infrastructure Design Solutions programme is in early sector engagement, offering an Acceptable-Solution-style pathway to expedited consenting for common upgrades.

What this means for you

Meeting the Tranche 2 standards will become a compliance requirement. IDS is a cost and time opportunity: published case studies show consenting cost reductions of up to 40%, and up to 60% for smaller plants, where an Acceptable Solution applies.



REGULATORY INSIGHTS

Insights for the Rotorua Lakes District Council

Drawn from the 2024/2025 National Environmental Performance Report.



Water supplied to the drinking water network

1,511 (L/connection/day)
15/63 councils reported



Current Annual Real Loss

407 (L/connection/day)
7/56 councils reported



Residential water use

696 L per connection per day
31/64 councils reported



Wastewater overflows

13/100km of wastewater pipe
22/58 councils



REGULATORY INSIGHTS

Insights for the Rotorua Lakes District Council

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER SERVICES – RLC – June 2026



Private Community Supplies

Brunswick Park

Tarawera

Parklands

Mourea/Okawa Bay

Otaramarae/Okere/Whangamarino

Kennedy Bay

Marae ?



Issues known to the Authority

Tarawera Community supply non-compliant, work with Authority achieved compliance

E. coli and Arsenic at Brunswick

E. coli at Parklands

Te Takinga Marae bore VR Resorts repeat *E. coli*

Planned Papakainga development Otaramarae

Kennedy Bay farmer to disconnect homes

Registration of marae by November 2028



How we'd like to work with you

1

Confirm your baseline Engage with Management to confirm your organisation-specific compliance and performance baseline.

2

Bring regulatory questions to us For questions on the standards and how they work in practice, engage the Authority before commissioning external interpretation. The Minister has encouraged the sector to do so.

3

Engage before decisions settle The Authority's information is most useful before your first strategy and investment decisions are locked in.

Engage early, engage directly, and form an accurate view of your position. The Authority's regulatory inputs work best on accurate information, and so do your board's decisions.