# Drinking Water Network Environmental Performance – Summary

## Introduction

The Water Services Act 2021 (the Act) introduces new requirements for network operators, to monitor and report on the environmental performance of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater networks (Part 3, Subpart 8).

These requirements are designed to provide greater transparency about the performance of networks and the impacts they have on the environment and public health. They will contribute to the continuous and progressive improvement of the quality of water services in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

These requirements will also complement the general functions and objectives of Taumata Arowai under the Act to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai.

### Only a very small number of drinking water suppliers are considered network operators

The new requirements only apply to networks and network operators. These two terms have very specific definitions under the Act which means that only drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater networks owned by, or operated on behalf of councils or government departments are captured.

We will use this public consultation to test our proposed approach to developing environmental performance measures for drinking water networks only. Environmental performance measures for wastewater and stormwater will be introduced at a later stage.

We have defined environmental performance as relating to the effects of networks on the environment, including the operation of infrastructure and processes.

In this context, *environment* has the meaning given to it by the Resource Management Act 1991, this includes:
• the impact of a network on any natural receiving environment
• the impact of a network on the social and cultural wellbeing of people and communities
• the performance of a network and its impact on ecosystems, people, and communities
• any social, economic, or cultural factors that may impact on environmental performance.

### Why should communities care about environmental performance of networks?

This change is about protecting the health of our people and environment. Communities are affected because the performance of networks directly impacts the environment and public health.

Taking a holistic and integrated view of the management of wai (water), as articulated through the concept of Te Mana o te Wai, is crucial.

Te Mana o te Wai draws on a Te Ao Māori perspective to recognise the whole-of-system approach to protecting wai, as an essential resource, from mountains to sea (ki uta ki tai).

# Drinking water network measures

We propose to introduce a package of drinking water environmental performance measures, grouped into five areas which correspond to the key insights we want to gain.

These measures will be phased in over a period of three years from 1 July 2022, to reflect the ability of drinking water network operators to collect the information.

1. **From 1 July 2022 (highlighted light blue in Table One)**: we will require all drinking water network operators to start recording the data required for each measure.

2. **From 1 July 2023 (highlighted blue in Table One):** we will require all drinking water network operators to report on all previous measures, as well as several additional measures.

3. **From 1 July 2024 (highlighted dark blue in Table One):** we will require all drinking operators to report on all existing measures, and a further set of additional measures.

## Table One: Drinking water environmental performance measures

| Insights | Performance Measure |
|---|---|
| **Is the environment and public health protected?** | Drinking water service coverage |
| | Water abstraction within environmental limits |
| | Resource consent compliance |
| | Fish passage and screening |
| | Drinking water treatment by-products |
| | Impact of capital works on ecosystems |
| **Are services economically sustainable?** | Affordability |
| | Revenue covers costs |
| | Asset depreciation is funded |
| | Debt at serviceable levels |
| | Actual expenditure aligns with budgeted expenditure |
| | Water supply capital investment projects |
| **Are services reliable?** | Customer water use |
| | Fault attendance and resolution |
| | System interruptions |
| | Asset condition |
| | Water pressure |
| | Water restrictions |
| | Capacity to accommodate growth |
| **Are resources used efficiently?** | Network water losses |
| | Efficient consumer use of water |

| Insights | Performance Measure |
|---|---|
| | Alternative water use |
| | Energy efficiency |
| | Greenhouse gas emissions |
| **Are services resilient?** | Sufficient fire-fighting water availability |
| | Return to service post-natural disaster |
| | Resilience to electricity/supply chain service disruptions |
| | Resilience to cyber threats / terrorist attack |
| | Ability to withstand drought |
| | Managing climate change risk |

## We are interested in:

- whether we have missed any measures or data which will help us assess the insights identified
- whether you think some of the data we are asking drinking water network operators to collect is unnecessary
- whether some of the measures and/or data has been included in the wrong time period.

# Next steps

We will use feedback from public consultation to inform the final form of the drinking water network environmental performance measures which we expect to test through targeted engagement ahead of 1 July 2022.

Targeted engagement will also be used to test:

- data collection frequency, methods, and standards
- our approach to measuring data quality, including how much confidence we can have in the data
- how we approach qualitative data collection (e.g., how network operators provide a narrative to support the data they provide)
- additional, updated or amended measures to incorporate Te Ao Māori perspectives.