



About the Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai

Who we are

At the Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai, we're committed to ensuring everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand has access to safe and reliable drinking water every day.

To support this, we regulate drinking water suppliers so they meet the rules for monitoring and treating water, and we provide education and support for community and private drinking water suppliers so they can supply safe drinking water.

We also play a role improving the way wastewater and stormwater networks affect the environment. We do this by maintaining a set of standards and reporting how the network operators are performing.

We are a Crown entity, with a Board and Māori Advisory Group - Te Puna, appointed by the Minister of Local Government.

Our vision is: Safe water, every day for everyone | Kia tiakina te wai, hei oranga mō te katoa. But we know we won't get there alone. It will take all of us working together to achieve a future where everyone has safe water when they turn on the tap.

Why we were established

In August 2016, contaminated drinking water caused a gastroenteritis outbreak in Havelock North, Hawke's Bay. Over a third of the town's residents became ill. Forty-five people were hospitalised and it is possible that the outbreak contributed to three deaths.

This tragedy highlighted the need for a dedicated water services regulator and led the Government to establish us on 1 March 2021.

On 15 November 2021, we took over as drinking water regulator for Aotearoa from the Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora.

In October 2023, we took on wider responsibilities for the environmental performance of public wastewater and stormwater networks, extending our role to cover the full range of water services.

More recently, the late 2023 outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in Queenstown served as a reminder of the significant impact that waterborne illness can have on communities and the importance of having essential drinking water treatment in place. This incident likely made over 90 people ill and 11 people visit hospital emergency departments.



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What we do

We are currently focussed on ensuring drinking water supplies that are registered with us meet the Rules and Standards. For those supplies not yet registered, or on a compliance pathway, we provide guidance and education to support improved water quality and reduce public health risk.

Some examples of what we do as the Water Services Authority:

- provide information and guidance to help drinking water suppliers meet their responsibilities
- engage early and meaningfully with Māori
- connect with drinking water suppliers to understand their realities so that we can identify ways to make compliance more straightforward, while protecting public health
- review Drinking Water Safety Plans
- monitor compliance
- develop environmental performance measures and standards for wastewater and stormwater
- publish annual reports so people understand the performance of their drinking water, wastewater and stormwater network services and to help improve performance across the water sector over time.

What if I collect water to use at my home only?

If your home isn't connected to a council drinking water supply, and you collect rainwater or other water that you use only at your own home, you aren't a drinking water supplier under the Act.

This means you don't need to register your supply with us and the Act doesn't apply to you.

But it's still important to take steps to protect yourself and your whanau from getting sick from your drinking water. We publish guidance on how to test and treat your water to make it safe.



Signalled legislative changes

In August 2024, the Government set out proposed changes to water services legislation that it plans to introduce by the end of 2025. This includes extending the timeframe for currently unregistered supplies to register by an extra three years (to 2028), plus an extra two years (to 2030) to become compliant.

It also includes a proposal to exclude shared domestic drinking water supplies serving 25 or fewer people from regulation under the Water Services Act.

More information on Government's proposed changes is available on the Department of Internal Affairs website: dia.govt.nz/Water-Services-Policy-and-Legislation

Have a question for us?

Visit our website for information about our role and safe drinking water: taumataarowai.govt.nz.

If you have a specific question about supplying safe drinking water, please email us at info@taumataarowai.govt.nz.