



Priority projects for 2025

Drinking water

A continued laser focus on safe drinking water

Council suppliers and several government agencies provide drinking water to 84% (~4.4 million) of people in New Zealand. Most but not all of these supplies have essential bacterial and protozoa treatment measures in place. Over the past year, as a result of our regulatory work to ensure all public supplies have essential multi-barrier protections, around 500,000 more New Zealanders are on track to have access to safer drinking water by the end of 2025. This will continue to be a top focus area for us.

Advice and guidance to support suppliers

This year we intend to increase our support and guidance for drinking water suppliers to help them deliver higher quality water to their communities. Our aim is to ensure this guidance is tailored for different groups of suppliers and is easy to use and understand.

Review of the Rules that apply to drinking water suppliers

We are working at pace to review the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules (the Rules) to make them more straightforward for drinking water suppliers to use to meet their responsibilities.

In 2024, for small to medium drinking water supplies (serving 500 people or fewer), we consulted on and updated the Rules. These refreshed rules came into effect 1 January 2025. We have developed supporting information to help suppliers understand what the changes mean for them and further guidance is being developed.

In 2025, we plan to review, consult on and update the Rules for large drinking water supplies, those that serve 500 or more people. There is an opportunity to work with us to ensure that our rules are fit for purpose for all communities and to consider potential Māori approaches for applicability/incorporation.

Community and private supplies

Some 14% of New Zealand's drinking water is provided through community and private supplies. Many of these supplies are in remote or rural areas, can be hard to reach, affected by adverse weather and are run by volunteers, whānau or local communities.

Later this year, we will start publishing handy resources to support community and private supplies to ensure the drinking water they supply to their communities is safe.



Water Services Authority
Taumata Arowai

Opportunity for greater uptake of cheaper treatment options

Drinking water suppliers have a range of options to support their responsibilities to provide safe drinking water.

One option is to provide centralised treatment and to follow the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules. Another option – one that we think many community and private drinking water suppliers might want to consider for their communities – is to treat water at the house or building where it is consumed with an “end-point treatment” system and to follow an Acceptable Solution. Acceptable Solutions are currently available for three types of drinking water supplies: roof, spring and bore, and mixed-use rural.

To respond to supplier feedback, we’re currently reviewing the Acceptable Solutions. The aim is to make it more straightforward for suppliers to determine if an Acceptable Solution is the right compliance option for their supplies and communities. We expect to consult on proposed changes to Acceptable Solutions in late April.

Addressing key barriers around mixed-use rural supplies

As mentioned above, Acceptable Solutions are currently available for three types of drinking water supplies: roof, spring and bore, and mixed-use rural.

Supplies are classified as ‘mixed-use rural’ if at least 50% of water supplied is for farm (e.g. stock or irrigation) use and up to 50% is used as drinking water.

We have identified some challenges and opportunities to improve the safety of drinking water for consumers on mixed-use rural supplies and have made resolving these a priority in 2025.

We have established an advisory group to help us understand key barriers around mixed-use rural supplies and how we can overcome them. Our aim is to save drinking water suppliers and consumers time, effort and cost and deliver good quality drinking water for communities.

Wastewater

National wastewater environmental performance standards – consultation open

A key priority for 2025 is the development of New Zealand’s first set of nationally consistent wastewater environmental performance standards.

Most of New Zealand’s wastewater infrastructure was built 30 to 40 years ago and is reaching the end of its useful life. Over the coming decade, approximately 60% of public wastewater treatment plants will need to renew a wastewater consent.

We’ve developed an initial set of standards alongside a number of experts from councils, the industry, and iwi and hapū. These relate to the discharge of treated wastewater to water and to land, the beneficial reuse of biosolids, and to monitoring and reporting wastewater overflows and bypasses.

The proposed standards would set nationally consistent requirements for public wastewater networks and operators to meet. This would drive cost efficiencies and support network owners to better plan for the cost of infrastructure – while protecting public and environmental health. Standards also aim to make monitoring and compliance for regional councils easier by standardising contaminant limits and monitoring and reporting requirements in consents.

We have undertaken specific engagement on the standards with iwi and hapū in the Waikato, Waipā and Whanganui River catchments in line with our Treaty settlement obligations. Broader engagement with iwi and hapū, subject to interest and capacity, will continue into May.

Find out more about the proposal and have your say at: korero.taumataarowai.govt.nz/regulatory/wastewater-standards

This consultation closes on Thursday, 24 April 2025. (Note that 25 April is Anzac Day.)

Overall role

A levy is proposed

A proposed new levy to fund the Authority is expected to be in place by 1 July 2025.

Under the proposal, the levy applies to councils and council-controlled organisations that supply water services to the majority of New Zealanders. (Private and community suppliers, such as marae, are not proposed to be subject to the levy.)

The Government recently finished consulting on the proposal and consideration of feedback is underway. If approved by the Government, we would work with councils and CCOs on the levy’s implementation.

Annual national performance reporting published in June

In June 2025, we will publish two reports that cover the state of drinking water and commentary on the challenges facing wastewater and stormwater networks in New Zealand.

We produce these reports each year.

- **Drinking Water Regulation Report 2024.** Covers supplier performance based on data and information for the 2024 calendar year provided by registered drinking water suppliers about the safety and sufficiency of the drinking water they supply.
- **Network Environmental Performance Report 2023/24.** Covers data and information for 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 provided by operators of publicly owned drinking water networks and includes some information about urban public wastewater and urban stormwater networks.

Production of these reports, which we look to improve each year, is a significant commitment by us to provide greater public transparency on the changing state of water services in New Zealand.