

# Iwi/Māori values and the wastewater standards

To meet our Treaty settlement and legislative obligations, the Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai (the Authority) has undertaken a range of activities to inform proposed wastewater standards.



## A How have iwi and hapū values informed the development of the standards?

Key elements in this work:

**Treaty settlement obligations:** Ongoing review to identify Treaty settlement arrangement obligations and explore potential impacts of standards.

**Iwi and hapū perspectives:** Developed case studies to understand iwi and hapū involvement in wastewater treatment arrangements and council relationships.

**Technical advice:** Informed by practitioners, technical experts, and the Authority's Māori Advisory Group – Te Puna.

The Authority worked with iwi/Māori and councils to develop case studies detailing iwi and hapū involvement in wastewater treatment:

**20 wastewater treatment plants identified with iwi and hapū involvement** across a range of characteristics including size, location, and discharge types.

**Desktop research undertaken** to understand iwi and hapū perspectives and develop a shortlist of 10 plants.

**Six case studies were developed through intensive engagement** with iwi and hapū who were part of the development and ongoing monitoring of the wastewater arrangements.

**Engagement was also undertaken** with territorial authorities (TAs) and regional councils (RCs) to further inform our understanding of the wastewater arrangements.

**A detailed case study report** identifying key insights and themes from the six case studies was compiled - this informed ongoing development of the proposed wastewater standards.

## B How do the proposed standards reflect iwi and hapū values?

Symbol key: What iwi and hapū told us How this has informed the wastewater standards

What iwi & hapū said	How this has informed the standards
Human waste must go through a process of whakanoa (cleansing) before being integrated back into the environment	TAs will continue to have obligations under local government legislation to engage with their communities about wastewater arrangements. <b>Each iwi and hapū will need to consider whether options for change to these arrangements align with their local tikanga, mātauranga, and aspirations around whakanoa processes.</b>
Human waste is tapu (prohibited) and discharge to water should be avoided	The proposed wastewater standards <b>include a discharge to land standard.</b> The intention is to create a pragmatic and cost effective pathway for local councils, iwi, hapū, and communities when considering any change to their current wastewater arrangements.
At-place decision-making is important as an expression of the role of iwi and hapū	The proposed wastewater standards will set treatment requirements in a way that is calibrated to the sensitivity of the receiving environment, including public health and environmental outcomes. <b>There will be transparent, regular reporting to iwi and hapū</b> about whether treatment plants are meeting these requirements, and whether overflows are happening in their area.
The highest wastewater treatment standard should be achieved for discharges to water and land	The proposed standards represent <b>a balance between cost, public health and environmental outcomes, and community aspirations.</b> The treatment requirements are set at a level that protects public health and the environment.
Biosolids should not be transported between regions	<b>The proposed standard allows safe reuse of biosolids which may reduce transport of biosolids between regions</b> if they meet specific treatment and management requirements, ensuring environmental and public health risks are managed. It removes current obstacles, such as consenting requirements for high-grade biosolids reuse.
Wastewater discharge should not impact cultural practices such as mahinga kai (food gathering)	Standards propose a <b>Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment when discharging near shellfish gathering sites</b> to identify public health risks from pathogen exposure and tailor treatment limits accordingly. Significantly greater reporting of network overflows (untreated or partially treated wastewater) is also proposed to provide information to affected communities.
Iwi and hapū are experts and should be resourced to engage in wastewater treatment decision-making	<b>This falls outside the scope of the standards.</b> Resourcing for iwi and hapū remains a matter for local communities and councils to address. Proposed standards aim to streamline the consenting process, saving time for participants while allowing iwi and hapū to contribute to key wastewater management decisions.
Wāhi tapu, urupā, and sensitive receiving environments must not be impacted by wastewater discharge	Iwi and hapū should <b>continue to engage with TAs and RCs on impacts to sites of significance</b> such as wāhi tapu, urupā, and wāhi tūpuna. <b>Discharges to land, or use of biosolids on land, will not be allowed on or near wāhi tapu.</b> The proposed treatment standards will not apply to sensitive environments, such as pristine waterbodies or areas near drinking water intakes.
Monitoring and reporting should incorporate tikanga or mātauranga Māori-based approaches	<b>The proposed wastewater standards will significantly increase monitoring and reporting about wastewater arrangements and their compliance with consents.</b> It will remain with individual iwi and hapū to engage with councils on monitoring and reporting requirements in line with local tikanga and mātauranga.
Innovation should be enabled	Wastewater standards set quality requirements for treatment. <b>New and innovative approaches to treatment can continue, as long as these quality requirements are met.</b>
What iwi & hapū said	How this has informed the standards

## C How are we considering Treaty settlement obligations?

The Authority is engaging with iwi and hapū across the country.

**1 Treaty settlement arrangements that impose statutory obligations on decision-makers under the Water Services Act:** We are continuing to engage with iwi in the Waikato, Waipā, and Whanganui catchments, where Treaty settlements impose obligations on decision-makers.

**2 Resource management arrangements relating to water services:** We are engaging with iwi and hapū that have arrangements under Treaty settlements, the Resource Management Act, or other legislation relating to wastewater management.

**3 All other iwi and hapū across the country:** The Authority has a duty to engage meaningfully with all Māori in relation to its functions, and there are opportunities for all iwi and hapū to understand and respond to the proposals.

### Overflows



Overflows occur in almost all networks, especially in older, poorly maintained ones when blockages or heavy rainfall overwhelm them.

There is limited or poor monitoring of overflows and reporting to communities in many places. Councils have varying levels of network knowledge; some councils don't know where or why overflows happen.

The proposals in the discussion document are designed to require councils to provide transparent information to the public about overflows when they happen, particularly where they are high risk or impact on activities such as mahinga kai.

The aim is to improve network knowledge and public reporting as this can significantly reduce the frequency of overflows and protect communities and our water bodies.