

## Government 3 Waters Review

**On 1 August 2019 the Government, by joint announcement from the Honourable Dr David Clark and the Honourable Nanaia Mahuta, announced wide spread changes to manage the provision of drinking water and the management of storm water, and waste water reticulation and discharge.**

The Government press release is found [here](#).

One of the key aspects of this announcement is that the Government intends to establish a new "watchdog" to oversee the standards for drinking water supply, and to ensure compliance. Clearly the intention is to require multi barrier protection, including mandatory disinfection. Exceptions are to be approved only in "appropriate circumstances". This is intended to provide greater levels of assurance to water consumers that water is treated to the standard required to protect human health.

The Government will introduce a new Water Services Bill in 2019 with the intention that it is consulted on, and passed by the middle of 2020. There is mention that timeframes will be provided (up to five years) for drinking water suppliers to transition to compliance under the new regime.

At this stage details on what the standards will be have not been provided and will need to be clearly set out in future legislation. It may well turn out to be that those standards are established by the new "watchdog" under regulation.

This will be one of the key outputs from this reform and will dictate the extent to which local authorities, and water suppliers will need to fund upgrades and to what standard.

This is a major piece of work for the Government and will be followed closely by territorial local authorities in particular. These reforms are likely to also apply to regulate small water supply

schemes where reticulated drinking water is supplied to others.

### Scope of Review

The scope of the review announced by the Government is as follows:

- an extension of the regulatory coverage to all drinking water suppliers, except individual household self-suppliers;
- a multi-barrier approach to drinking water safety, including mandatory disinfection of water supplies, with exemptions only in appropriate circumstances;
- stronger obligations on water suppliers and local authorities to manage risks to sources of drinking water; and
- strengthened compliance, monitoring and enforcement of drinking water regulation.

While regional councils will remain the primary regulators for the environment, there will be stronger central oversight of wastewater and stormwater regulation, including:

- requirements for wastewater and stormwater operators to report annually on a set of national environmental performance measures;
- national good practice guidelines for the design and management of wastewater and stormwater networks; and
- monitoring of emerging contaminants in wastewater and stormwater, and coordinating national responses where necessary.

### Waste water and stormwater discharge

One interesting aspect of the announcement is that it states there are to be targeted reforms to

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## Government 3 Waters Review (Continued)

improve the performance of the wastewater system. This is signalled to include new national environmental standards for wastewater discharges and overflows. At this stage there is no detail on the types of standards the Government is planning to introduce.

Any national environmental standard for wastewater discharge will need to be closely reviewed to work out what level of treatment may be required to achieve those standards, and the likely costs that will need to be budgeted for.

In terms of stormwater the announcement states the Government is not looking to set standards, rather it will focus on collecting information on performance and promoting best practice.

### Want to know more?

Should you wish to discuss any aspects of this reform please contact our [local government](#) experts.