

Water Supply

Greater Wellington is responsible for collecting, treating and distributing safe and healthy drinking water to Wellington, Hutt, Upper Hutt and Porirua City councils. This work is carried out for Greater Wellington by Wellington Water Limited, a joint council-owned water management company. City and district councils are responsible for the distribution of water to households and businesses through their own networks. Providing the bulk water supply to the city councils involves managing an extensive network of infrastructure, ensuring safe, high-quality, secure and reliable water sources, and that our freshwater is sustainable.

Our priorities are focused on providing clean and sustainable drinking water and reducing water demand and providing bulk supply that is respectful to the environment.

Our priority is a bulk water supply that is robust, to ensure sufficient drinking water is available for the immediate future and for generations to come. We must also be able to cope with emergencies and the long-term impacts of climate change, while embracing the concept of Te Mana o te Wai on our source and ecology.

Risk prioritised investment balances future renewals and upgrade programmes giving us confidence in our investment decision making, increases our resilience and our ability to sustainably supply the district.

This group of activities contributes to the Community Outcomes:

Thriving environment

Water supply is respectful to the environment that we live in

Connected communities

The region has sufficient water supply that is of high quality and safe

Resilient future

Bulk water supply is sustainable to the community as our environment changes

Relationship with mana whenua and mātāwaka

Tāngata whenua play a strong role planning for capacity of resources, water and ensuring the mauri of our environment is maintained. Working with tāngata whenua iwi is critical to our ability to deliver many of our water supply projects. Te Mana o te Wai recognises and realises the mana of our waters. Te Mana o te Wai is a concept for managing all waters in a way that prioritises the health and wellbeing of the water (quantity, quality and ecology).

Te Mana o te Wai is a cloak over all Greater Wellington bulk water supply work, freshwater regulation and Resource Management Act (RMA) activities functions and duties.

All persons and duties in these functions must give effect to Te Mana o te Wai. This whole system approach recognises Te Ao Maori world view and the fundamentals of tikianga, matauranga Māori and kaitiakitanga, (to name a few).

Two iwi groups have joined the committee overseeing Wellington Water Limited. Te Rūnanga Toa Rangatira Inc. and Taranaki Whānui now each have a seat on the Wellington Water Limited Committee, which also comprises a single member of each shareholding council.

Opportunities and challenges

Opportunities

- Embracing and realising Te Mana o te Wai and managing all waters in a way that prioritises the health and wellbeing of our water (quantity, quality and ecology) alongside a kaupapa Māori approach in our work programmes and services
- Community awareness of the value of water supply services and their provision will drive proactive leak detection and effective water conservation initiatives
- The establishment of a regulator and the broader reform process to ensure a consistent standard of safe and reliable drinking water across the country, but also health and wellbeing of all waters across the whole water cycle
- Climate change impacts are being felt now and within the lifetime of this LTP will be felt more keenly. This requires deliberate, evidence-based decisions in the short term, to enable our long term, well-planned adaptation approach, including how, and where, we deliver water assets and services
- Government progress on its infrastructure priorities of transport, housing and water, through new delivery mechanisms such as Te Waihanga (Infrastructure Commission) and Taumata Arowai (water services regulator) is promoting approaches to infrastructure that are adaptive, optimised and future oriented – collaborative, with consideration for long-term use, and lifetime cost and demand factors

Challenges

- Regulatory reforms, stricter water quantity and quality rules, decarbonisation, adapting to climate change, natural disasters, urban growth and demand and the structural ageing of infrastructure all require changes to what was business-as-usual service delivery
- We are not meeting our one in 50 year drought resilience level of service. Changes in climate, water shortages during drought years and as demand from increases in population will contribute to our ability to meet current and future demand
- Funding and delivery of a significant capital work programme to maintain levels of service and support growth

- Reducing emissions associated with the abstraction, treatment and supply of drinking water and well as construction of new carbon intensive (concrete, steel) assets
- Skills shortage at all levels of the engineering industry from experienced consultants and contractors, to skilled labour are limiting the availability of contractors and consultants to progress programmed works. The limited availability is also leading to increased costs and timeframes for delivery

Significant negative effects and how we will address them

Water supply infrastructure for the collection, storage, treatment and distribution of water can have a negative effect on environmental wellbeing through water abstraction levels in groundwater and in rivers, and the use of electricity for treating and pumping water. A new supply could also result in an increase in these effects as well as on indigenous biodiversity.

We will address this by identifying the environmental impacts of existing water supply activities and very closely monitoring these through resource consents and an ISO 14001 accredited environmental management system. We are also reducing our impacts by continuing to use electricity and chemicals more efficiently and by encouraging people to use water wisely.