

9 September 2024

OIA-734



Tēnā koe 

Response to your information request - Wellington Water leadership

Thank you for your request of 11 August 2024 asking for information relating to Wellington Water's leadership since 1 May 2024.

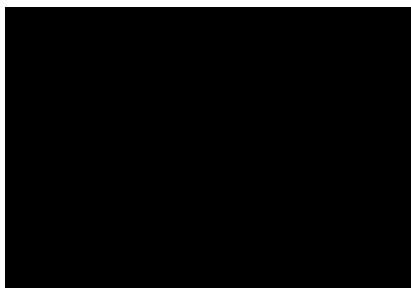
Some of the information you have requested is **enclosed**. However, some of the information has been withheld under s 7 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (**LGOIMA**). The Appendix below sets out the information that has been disclosed and the information that has been withheld, including the reasons for withholding.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly at <https://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz/about-us/official-requests/official-information-act-responses/> with your personal information removed.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to email us at official.information@wellingtonwater.co.nz

Nāku noa, nā



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APPENDIX

1. *All correspondence between Wellington Water's board and CEO relating to the organisation's leadership, failures of leadership, and discussions of changes in leadership.*

Please refer to the **enclosed** email of 26 May 2024, and the response below regarding the other information falling within this request.

2. *All correspondence and communication between Tonia Haskell as CEO and the Board regarding her resignation.*

The other information falling within the above two requests has been withheld under the following sections of LGOIMA:

- section 7(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons; and / or
- section 7(2)(f)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to members or officers or employees of any local authority in the course of their duty.

The withheld information arises in the context of an employee / employer relationship, which gives rise to expectations that sensitive information will be treated confidentially. Disclosure of such information would intrude on Tonia Haskell's privacy and expose her to unwanted attention.

Further, some of the information constitutes the free and frank expression of opinions between officers and / or employees of Wellington Water Limited. If such information was disclosed, employees and officers may feel inhibited from expressing such opinions, leading to decisions being made without all necessary information, causing the effective conduct of public affairs to be prejudiced.

We appreciate that there is public interest in Tonia Haskell's resignation given her role as chief-executive of a public entity and the recent media attention. However, we consider that the strength of the public interest is tempered by the fact that there is already a significant amount of information available to the public about the circumstances of her resignation, including a publicly available report that was the output of an independent review. We therefore consider that the public interest does not outweigh the good reasons for withholding the information.

3. *All communications between Tonia Haskell as CEO and other staff relating to her resignation.*

Please refer to the **enclosed** email that was sent to all staff on 8 August 2024.

4. *All communications between the Board and other staff relating to the resignation of Tonia Haskell.*

Please refer to the **enclosed** email that was sent to all staff on 8 August 2024.

5. *Any communications relating to a leaving gift or leaving function for Tonia Haskell, if applicable, the cost of any leaving gifts or functions for her departure.*

Unfortunately the information requested does not exist. Therefore, this request is refused under section 17(e) of LGOIMA because the requested information does not exist.

From: Tonia Haskell
Sent: Sunday, 26 May 2024 11:17 am
To: Nick Leggett; zzz Leanne Southey
Subject: Next steps on Corporate Overhead and some BAU updates
Attachments: Changes to Alliance Leadership

Kia ora Nick,

Welcome back! (?)

Firstly thanks to Leanne for her wise counsel last week and Pat for coming and standing for us. It worked well and went down well with the team.

Corporate Overhead - we are now moving into recovery phase, here is my thinking which I will talk through with the team tomorrow:

- Review – Garry from Charles’ team is leading the internal investigation. Presume we should keep moving on that?
- Independent Review – Assuming you have landed Roy Baker, it would be good to meet him soon. I am sure the Terms of Reference will be fine with the people you have on the board. My only thought to check is included in the ToR is structural – where should the function and the checks and balances sit in an ideal world? (for the CCO or ourselves if that takes too long or doesn’t get pulled off.
- Audit – I believe the OAG has been in touch already, and I think we should pull Clint in for a chat? What do you think Leanne?

Customer Operations Group and the Alliance

- We have completed the consultation process and given the feedback to staff, completed Monday 19. I still need to get around the depots to complete the comms process
- The outcome confirmed support for the split of the function of GM and Alliance Manager
- The only team that will report in to WWL will be the customer team to keep the connection between WWL and our end-users. The Manager will sit on the Alliance GLT to keep that strong connection
- We have confirmed there isn’t enough work for a new GM role, so are looking to find a temporary home while I work through whether to have it as an add on to an existing GM or create a new role that either picks up some of the overload/need elsewhere (Susannah has 12 direct reports!) . Charles has put up his hand to have the interim role, which I will accept. It would be good experience for him.
- Fulton Hogan have been really busy with filling the Alliance Director role and the Operations Manager (Valitha) role. LGOIMA s7(2)(a) from Dunedin is in the frame for the AD role – I have had dealings with him and found him a good operator. There is also someone we will meet this week from Taranaki to pick up Valitha’s role on a temporary basis until the AD gets their feet under the desk. So nice fast work from FH
- FH have also put some thoughts into KPIs which look good, but need to be tested as to doability

Councils – Performance Framework and the MSAs

- We had the DIA Performance Framework unofficially land on our desk last week. It’s exactly what we thought it would be – and quite a long way from the councils’ list. It’s basically a tune up of the existing DIA measures – safe water, enough water, customer satisfaction, lead time for key activities, pressure for firefighting etc...
- The councils are still very vocal on getting it done (not just WCC) but I am worried they are still going to push for detail while the framework isn’t landed
- I would also like to get some governance over it – to bring it up to the right strategic level. And the governance will be needed for the other shared measures in the SOI like metering. I think the CE forum is the right place for that, but would be keen on your thoughts.

- Not a lot of action on the MSAs, I suspect Wendy is swamped. Jo Millar from HCC was talking about making “tweaks” as a result of the corporate overhead... I think we need to talk to Wendy and Campbell soon about not being pulled in different directions, especially with a tight corporate budget next year.

Will end with the good news story – what do you know – the additional funding means the backlog is reducing. And the team were able to quantify the volume of water the customers saved over summer, and that landed well at the start of last week.

Looking forward to catching up, and thank again Leanne.

Nga mihi
Tonia

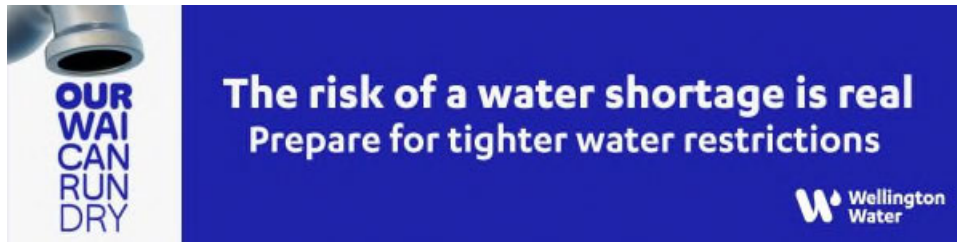
Tonia Haskell (she/her)
Chief Executive



Tel 04 912 4400 Mob LGOIMA s 7(2)(a)

Private Bag 39804, Wellington Mail Centre 5045
Level 4, 25 Victoria Street, Petone, Lower Hutt

www.wellingtonwater.co.nz



From: [Tonia Haskell](#)
To: [* All Staff](#)
Subject: Haere rā
Date: Thursday, August 8, 2024 10:22:40 AM

Kia ora e te whānau,

After five and a half years in leadership roles at Wellington Water it is time for a new challenge. I am therefore stepping down from my Chief Executive role.

This has not been an easy decision to make, as I have been incredibly proud to be your Chief Executive and of the work we have achieved to lift our operational performance together in recent years.

I took on the Chief Executive role last year with the intention of guiding the organisation into a new regional water entity and to make sure that Wellington Water's people were looked after during that transition process.

That wider context has now changed and a different strategic path is ahead for our organisation. It is therefore time for someone with a different skill set to take the reins and to work with the Board, our councils and stakeholders on taking Wellington Water into the next phase.

I am keen to head back into a more operational role, but in the meantime, after a very busy few years, I'd like to take some out to recharge and connect back with my friends and whanau. My last day in the office will be 9 August 2024.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for the hard work and dedication you have put into maintaining and restoring our network. It's been an absolute privilege to have been able to lead you for this time.

The transition will be managed by the Board with the support of an experienced Senior Leadership team. I wish the organisation all the best and will think of you every time I brush my teeth without running the tap!

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei

Noho ora mai,
Tonia

Tonia Haskell (she/her)
Chief Executive



Tel 04 912 4400 Mob [EGOIMA 9 71218](#)

Private Bag 39804, Wellington Mail Centre 5045
Level 4, 25 Victoria Street, Petone, Lower Hutt

www.wellingtonwater.co.nz

Cooking oil clogs pipes!
Protect our environment
and never tip oil down the drain.



From: [Nick Leggett](#)
To: [* All Staff](#)
Subject: Chief Executive resignation
Date: Thursday, August 8, 2024 10:20:46 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[Media release - Wellington Water Chief Executive steps down - 8 August.pdf](#)

Kia ora koutou

I am writing to you all to announce Tonia Haskell has stepped down from her role as Chief Executive.

I'd like to thank Tonia for her hard mahi and commitment to Wellington Water over the years. As many of you know, Tonia joined Wellington Water a number of years ago as the Group Manager for the Network Development and Delivery Group, a position she held for five years before taking on the role as Chief Executive in 2023.

Tonia has led the organisation during a time of change and uncertainty. At the beginning of 2023, she took up the mantle of Chief Executive to provide the organisation with stability as we headed into what was then anticipated to be a new water entity under the previous Government's Affordable Water Reform Programme.

Tonia not only provided a steady hand on the till but has also led the organisation to deliver some significant milestones.

In the last financial year, we delivered a \$330M capital programme for councils in the region.

The Wellington Water team successfully raised the risk and managed a tricky summer period last year where the region was facing heightened risk of tighter water restrictions and increasing water loss through leaks. This led to our councils increasing their investment into our continued efforts to find and fix more leaks, resulting in a significant reduction in the backlog in recent months.

Tonia's willingness to front difficult issues in the media as well as her personal commitment to the safety of frontline staff will also leave a positive legacy in the organisation.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to wish Tonia well in her future endeavours.

Tonia's last day is tomorrow Friday 9 August.

I realise that this news can be unsettling for some of you, off the back of what has already been a tough time recently and many of you will have questions around next steps. I want to assure you all that the Board is deeply aware of this. We are working through a process to provide you all with certainty around leadership and the right person to see us through this next phase of the Wellington Water journey.

The Board will begin to consider options for a more permanent appointment to the role. In the meantime, we have asked Charles Barker to act as Chief Executive. While we undertake this process, Charles has the Board's full confidence to act.

We will be issuing the attached media release soon.

Ngā mihi nui

Nick Leggett

Nick Leggett Board Chair



Private Bag 39804, Wellington Mail Centre 5045
Level 4, 25 Victoria Street, Petone, Lower Hutt

www.wellingtonwater.co.nz

Media release

Embargoed until 10:30am 8 August 2024

Wellington Water Chief Executive steps down

Wellington Water Board Chair, Nick Leggett, has announced that Wellington Water Chief Executive Tonia is stepping down from her role.

Nick thanked Tonia for her hard work and leadership over the past five and a half years with Wellington Water.

Nick said Tonia had a track record of delivery in her various leadership roles at Wellington Water.

“In her time at Wellington Water, the capital programme delivering water assets for the region had grown from \$60m to \$330m in the last financial year.”

Nick said many Wellingtonians had also admired Tonia’s willingness to front difficult issues in the media and be up front in discussing both challenges and solutions.

“Working for Wellington Water has been a privilege.” said Tonia. “The team at Wellington Water, its supplier whānau and partners are incredibly smart, hard-working and dedicated to improving water outcomes for the region. I am proud to have been part of that.”

Tonia joined Wellington Water as its Group Manager Network Development and Delivery in 2019. She has been in the Chief Executive role since early 2023.

“During my time as Chief Executive we have delivered major projects such as the Omāroro Reservoir and the Kaitoke Flume bridge and delivered a record level of pipe renewals. We have also lifted the operating performance of the organisation and navigated a long dry summer, reduced the backlog of leaks and are finally seeing a reduction in water usage and loss for the first time in five years.”

“With our operational performance now in good shape, now is a good time for me to move on, with the entity facing a different strategic future,” Tonia said.

From this Friday 9 August, Tonia will step down from the Chief Executive role.

The Board will begin a process over the coming weeks to appoint a new Chief Executive for Wellington Water.

ENDS

For media enquiries contact media@wellingtonwater.co.nz

About Wellington Water

Wellington Water is owned and fully funded by Wellington City Council, Hutt City Council, Porirua City Council, and Upper Hutt City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and South Wairarapa District Council. All six councils are equal shareholders.

Our councils own the water infrastructure in the region, and they task us to manage the infrastructure and deliver water services to our communities.

Wellington Water is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board and our organisation receive overall leadership and direction from the Wellington Water Committee, which are also responsible for appointing members to the Board.

The Wellington Water Committee is made up of representatives from our council owners and mana whenua.