

A message from Acting Chief Executive Tonia Haskell about The Government's Water Reform Changes

13 April 2023

(You can also watch the recording of Tonia's All staff meeting following today's announcement [here](#).)

Kia ora koutou

Today Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and the Minister of Local Government, Kieran McNulty have made an announcement, proposing a regionally-led model for the Government's three waters reform programme. The full announcement can be read [here](#).

The key things to note are:

- An increase of the number of entities from four to ten. The aim of this is to help strengthen the links between local communities and their water services. You can see the map of new entities in the Government's FAQ doc [here](#).
- The entity covering the wider Wellington region will include our current council owners, with the addition of Kapiti Coast, Carterton, and Masterton District Councils.
- The entities will be asset owning and financially independent from councils.
- The delivery timeframe is proposed to be extended, with entities to be stood up and operating by 1 July 2026. There is room for entities to go earlier if the councils all agree.
- Each of the regional mayors will have a seat on the regional representative groups of the ten entities. This change is intended to meet the call from local authorities for more local oversight.
- Partnership with iwi/Māori continues to be a key principle. Mana whenua will have the right to participate in decision making for water under the new model through equal membership of the regional representative groups.

For me, this reinforces the Government's ongoing commitment to reforms and ensuring better water outcomes for all New Zealanders. This is reassuring and, while there are a number of key changes proposed and much detail yet to be determined, the underlying principles of reforms have not changed.

The main impact for us from the Minister's announcement is the extension of the delivery timeframe. There are two big ticket items in there for us:

1. People – we are likely going to be in our current model for longer than we anticipated. It doesn't look like this will change anything in the pathway process, but we will make it a priority to land that question early.
2. Investment - there will be decisions that need to be made about funding and the investment pathways with LTPs.

We will work through what this means for us in consultation with our client councils.

It's still important to remember that with the addition of three extra councils, we'll still be moving from Wellington Water into a new organisation. Our new entity will be smaller than we originally thought, but the change to an asset owning model means a new organisation (albeit with a lot of our faces!)

The Government intends to have new legislation in place to support these changes before the October General election. Today's announcement, along with the recent policy position announced by the Opposition, all work to provide us with more clarity around what the future may bring.

The SLT and I are committed to ensuring a positive transition experience for our people. To that end, we will be having an All Staff hui on Teams this afternoon at 1pm to discuss in detail what the announcement means for us and what possible next steps will be.

In the meantime, I want to acknowledge that today's news may cause some concern for some people. Please speak to your manager about any concerns you may have or feel free to reach out to the transition team at 3WReform@wellingtonwater.co.nz.

We continue to have an important job to do, which is to provide safe and reliable water services to our customers and communities.

Ngā mihi

Tonia

