



## Water Services Authority - Taumata Arowai update December 2025

Good morning

2025 is nearly a wrap – it's been a big year for the sector. As we make our final push towards the Christmas break, I'd like to offer my genuine thanks to you all for your engagement with us on a range of important topics and what we have achieved together to improve water services.

Some highlights from 8681

- **Making complying with the Rules easier and simpler.** Early in 2025, following consultation, we confirmed changes to the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules for small and medium supplies to make it more straightforward for them to meet their responsibilities. We're currently consulting on proposed changes to the Rules for large supplies; consultation closes on Friday, 19 December. To give your feedback, please use our [online survey](#).
- **Released our updated CME Strategy.** In July, we released our [Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement Strategy 2025-28](#), which gives a three-year action plan for how we will regulate drinking water. It focuses on the biggest risks identified in the [Drinking Water Regulation Report 2024](#), and outlines what we require suppliers to focus on to address these – namely, improving systems, practices and infrastructure so everyone has the basics of safe drinking water in place.
- **Updated Acceptable Solutions.** In September, we confirmed three updated [Acceptable Solutions](#), which provide an easier compliance pathway for smaller, rural supplies to follow, enabling water to be treated at or near the buildings where people will drink it.
- **Launched New Zealand's first set of national wastewater standards.** Late last month, the Government announced new [national wastewater standards](#) that we developed. The standards will drive national consistency and make consenting wastewater infrastructure more cost

efficient for communities while protecting public health and the environment. Over time, all public wastewater networks will need to meet the new standards.

These are just some examples in what has been a full-on year. With the many changes and challenges the sector has faced, I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment shown throughout the year by our team and yours.

### **Forecasting weather and its impact on drinking water**

October's severe weather events were a reminder for drinking water suppliers to prepare for any disruption. They highlighted the need for backup power supply at key infrastructure.

Drinking water suppliers should have plans in place for disruption to their drinking water supply – whether that is from dry conditions or severe weather leading to temporary shortages.

Check your Drinking Water Safety Plans are up to date and ensure there is sufficiency of supply for communities in the event of water shortages or disruption.

Changes in weather events are an important time to check drinking water treatment hasn't been impacted, and the supply remains safe to drink.

In drier weather, we advise suppliers to monitor daily water usage to prepare early for any shortages. If demand starts to climb, talk early to your biggest water users about reducing pressure on the supply before the wider community is impacted.

Start planning communications to inform your community if water restrictions are required.

If dry weather conditions seem likely to impact your ability to provide safe and sufficient drinking water, [please let us know early](#), and small suppliers should contact their local council early so contingency plans can be developed.

Our website includes [advice about dry weather](#) and what suppliers can do to prepare.

To stay informed about weather conditions and possible droughts, keep track of Earth Science New Zealand's [drought monitor](#).

### **Campaign for campground and campsite operators**

Summer holidays are an important and busy time of year for campgrounds and campsites. For happy campers and a successful peak season, we've asked camping industry and tourism organisations to help us ensure the drinking water their members provide is safe.

In September 2025, six people were hospitalised and more than 40 others suffered gastrointestinal illness after they drank water that was contaminated by E.coli at a South Island campground.

Under [campground regulations](#) (which are administered by councils), campground operators must provide water that is safe to drink. Any campground or campsite that manages its own drinking water supply has a legal duty to ensure it's safe.

We developed [online content](#) to help campground and campsite operators understand how to keep campers safe, including advice on managing risks to water sources, treating water to make it safe to drink, keeping visitors informed and being prepared for emergencies. You can share our [campaign resources](#) to help make sure every camper in New Zealand can enjoy safe drinking water.

### **Far North District Council to run Kāeo drinking water supply**

Recently, we placed the privately owned Kāeo drinking water supply under statutory management and appointed Far North District Council to manage its drinking water supply. This followed a 10-year boil water advisory and came to a head when water was cut off entirely with no plan to reinstate a safe and sufficient supply for the Kāeo community.

Our decision was not taken lightly. This was the first time we used our “supplier of last resort” provision in the Water Services Act 2021. Each situation will be considered in line with the risk framework outlined in our CME Strategy.

We hope such interventions remain rare but we are committed to ensuring small, private and rural supplies provide safe drinking water.

We remind councils of their obligation to understand the private and community supplies within their boundaries, engage their operators and consider how to support safe outcomes before issues escalate. Councils are required to provide an assessment of these supplies to the Authority by July 2026.

### **Improvements in NEPR reporting**

We'd like to thank council and government operators of drinking water and wastewater networks for submitting their Network Environmental Performance Measures promptly.

This year, we've seen an increase in the number of submissions successfully uploaded into our database by the deadline, with late/non-submissions dropping from 17% in 23/24 to under 10% for 24/25 (with most late submitters pre-arranging extensions).

As we work through our full quality assurance process, it is clear there is a reduction in errors requiring manual verification.

We are now at the stage of performing verification checks on the data. A member of our team may be in touch with you if they have any technical queries about the data. We are aiming to release the data back to the sector by the end of the first quarter next year.

### **Safe holiday season**

I hope you get the chance to enjoy a well-earned rest over the summer holiday season.

We will have an on-call team operating over the break, so please [contact us](#) if you need to.

Our best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season.

**Sara McFall**

**Acting Chief Executive**



**Sara McFall**  
Head of Systems, Strategy & Performance

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