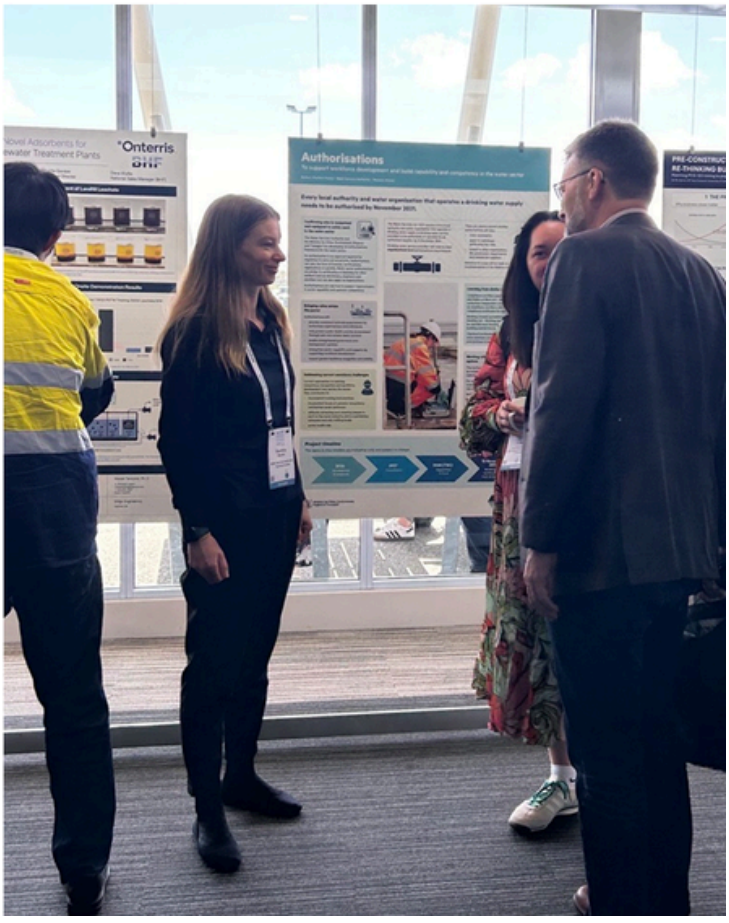
Water Services Authority
Taumata Arowai

October 2026

Tēnā koe

It was great to see many of you at the Water New Zealand Conference and various other engagements over the month. Engagement is an important part of our mahi. These events give us valuable opportunities to share our work and hear directly from you.

One of the many high points from the Water NZ conference was celebrating one of our staff, Sharlene Maslin, Senior Policy Advisor, whose poster on authorisations won the Water NZ poster competition at this year's conference – huge congratulations to her and you can read more about the proposed authorisations framework below.



In brief

This edition of our newsletter has an engagement focus – sharing insights and feedback that we are hearing from you through our engagements. We cover our engagement with new water services organisations, our proposed National Engineering Design Standards (NEDS) framework, wastewater standards, and Authorisations.

We also share some helpful guidance we have prepared following feedback on areas you might need a little more support such as responding to *E. coli* contamination and issuing consumer advisories.

This guidance and more is on our website to help you prepare for situations when you might need to act to protect your consumers. This includes information for drinking water suppliers on responding to natural hazard emergencies and preparing for dry weather, which is especially important with El Niño increases the chances of more frequent and extreme adverse weather events.

Read more about responding to natural hazards

Engaging with new water services organisations

Over the past month, our Board and Executive have met with the boards, chief executives, mayors and councillors of new and forming water services organisations. These have included IAWAI Waters, Waikato Waters, Alpine Waters, Tiaki Wai and operators across Canterbury and Otago.

These organisations are taking on obligations that previously sat with councils. They operate in a system shared by three regulators: the Authority, for water quality and environmental performance; the Commerce Commission, for economic regulation; and regional councils, as consent authorities.

Our aim is for every new board to understand from the outset where its regulatory obligations sit, what the Authority expects, and how to work with us.

The decisions new boards make now will shape their organisations for years to come. These decisions include setting operating and asset management approaches, carrying out due diligence on inherited assets, and preparing Water Services Strategies.

Our information and support are most valuable while these directions are being set. That is why we are engaging now, as established organisations set their priorities and organisations still being formed prepare for Day 1 and asset transfers.

Early feedback has been that these discussions have been well received, and many appreciate the forum to come together with the Authority and fellow governors of water services to discuss the immense job that is ahead of us across New Zealand.

We will continue these governance engagements through the end of the year. As we look to 2027, we plan to hold regional seminars across the motu, building on our recent Christchurch event for Canterbury and Otago.

We will also continue to keep our website updated with information for councils transitioning water services to water organisations.

Visit our web page for water organisations

Thanks for engaging with us on NEDS and wastewater standards

We recently consulted on our proposed National Engineering Design Standards (NEDS) framework. The NEDS will set the outcomes that three waters infrastructure must meet, much like the Building Code does for buildings. They will help make sure infrastructure is practical, resilient and fit for the future.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate. We received 53 responses to our proposal document and connected with more than 450 people from across the water sector.
We heard broad support for:

- a clear, practical framework with common objectives
- codes of practice structured by component and lifecycle
- a digital tool that makes NEDS easy to navigate
- prioritising the first tranche based on benefit and readiness.

As we continue to develop the standards, we will consider affordability and compliance costs, how the standards will be monitored, apply to renewals and across different development contexts, allow for local variation where it is needed, and align with the wider regulatory system. We also heard the importance of a clear process for water service providers to assess alternative solutions. We are aiming to release a summary of key themes and our focus areas for the first tranche of NEDS in December.

As we move into the next phase of policy and technical development, we will continue to work with the sector through the NEDS technical reference group and technical subject matter experts. If you are interested in registering as a technical subject matter expert, or if you have any feedback or further questions, you can reach the team at neds@taumataarowai.govt.nz.

Wastewater standards

Over the past six weeks, we consulted on a proposed second tranche of wastewater environmental performance standards. These cover discharges to air and metals in treated wastewater discharged from wastewater treatment plants.

The proposed standards aim to improve wastewater infrastructure performance by setting clear, consistent and transparent expectations. They retain a risk-based approach, so requirements remain proportionate to the level of risk. Thanks to everyone who had their say, we will be going through your submissions and will update you in the December newsletter.

Visit our website to find out more

Developing an authorisations framework



The Water Services Act requires councils and water organisations that supply drinking water to be authorised, or operated by an authorised supplier, by 15 November 2031.

We are working with the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport to develop an authorisations framework for the water sector.

An authorisation is regulatory approval to carry out an activity. It may take the form of a licence, certification, registration or permit. Authorisations will provide nationally consistent expectations for the water sector, supporting a more skilled and trusted workforce. We would like to thank everyone who has given feedback so far, including attending workshops run by Water New Zealand earlier this year. We anticipate carrying out further engagement to help shape the final proposals from December.

We will share more information about the proposals soon. If you have any questions, please email korero@taumataarowai.govt.nz.

For drinking water suppliers

Taking a consistent approach to *E. coli* detections

For councils and water organisations

We are always looking for ways to help you provide safe drinking water. Recent feedback showed us that there is uncertainty about what to do when you detect *E. coli* in your water supply. We've produced some new guidance for water service providers on what to do when *E. coli* is detected.

An *E. coli* detection can indicate that part of a drinking water supply's protection system has not worked as intended. Suppliers should investigate what happened and why by reviewing treatment performance, network conditions, operational information, and the integrity of the sampling and testing process.

As outlined in our Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement Strategy, the Authority has a low tolerance for repeat *E. coli* detections. To support improvement in this area, we have prepared guidance setting out our expectations for how *E. coli* detections should be investigated and responded to.

The investigation should continue even if repeat samples are clear. Suppliers should identify the root cause where possible, address weaknesses and take steps to prevent another detection. The goal is to learn from each event, strengthen drinking water systems and reduce *E. coli* detections over time.

Our guidance on responding to *E. coli* detections, along with a supporting response flowchart, is available on our website.

Guidance for unregistered and small supplies

We have also developed guidance for community-run drinking water supplies, including those that do not need to register.

The guidance explains the importance of acting quickly, how contamination can happen, and how to address issues and prevent future contamination.

Find more guidance on our website

Drinking Water notice videos



We have produced a series of animated videos to support the public to know what to do when their drinking water is subject to a consumer advisory, such as a Boil Water or Do Not Drink notice. We encourage you to take a look at the videos, keep them somewhere handy, and share them with consumers when a supply is subject to a drinking water notice.

Find them on our website

Suppliers: are your contact details up to date?

Ensuring we have up-to date details for your water supplies in Hinekōrako means we can act quickly to help you when things go wrong. We also use these details to make sure we represent your supply accurately in our public reporting.

Please check that your contact details, supply relationships, infrastructure information and population figures are current. Guidance on updating your details and the details of other portal users is available on our website.

If you cannot access Hinekōrako for your supply, please email opssupport@taumataarowai.govt.nz for help.

Find out more about updating your supply

For network operators

Thank you for your NEPR 2025/26 submissions
Thank you to public water operators across the country for completing and submitting your NEPR 2025/26 data returns.
We received 68 of the 69 expected returns, with 90%—submitted by the deadline. This is an eleven percent improvement on last year which is awesome to see.

This result reflects your ongoing commitment to working with us to ensure quality data that supports transparent performance reporting, and a better understanding of water services across New Zealand.

We recognise that preparing your data returns takes significant time and effort. Thank you to everyone involved in collecting, checking, and submitting information. Your contribution is essential to the success of the Network Environmental Performance Report and helps build a stronger evidence base for improving water services outcomes.

The latest NEPR was picked up across New Zealand with strong media coverage in national and local reporting. The media interest extended beyond reporting the findings and into broader discussions about infrastructure investment, reform, asset management, compliance, and future regulatory responses. The NEPR is helping to inform broad conversations about the long-term performance of the water services system and is a good reminder to ensure the information you are providing is robust.

Read the latest NEPR and DWRR