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To:
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Thank you and farewell

Kia ora

As I wrap up my term as Chief Executive at the Water Services Authority, I wanted to share some reflections and acknowledgements from my time at the helm. For those attending the upcoming [Water NZ Conference](#), I look forward to saying my farewells to you in person before I finish on 1 October 2026.

Thank you!

Firstly, I want to acknowledge you. As a recipient of this newsletter, you are either a water services operator, governor, practitioner, iwi representative or engaged member of the industry or public. The Authority cannot achieve its important mahi without you all working alongside us. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving New Zealand's water services.

I also want to acknowledge that, as a regulator, this relationship comes with some tension. I do not underestimate the effort it takes to address a long-neglected safety and infrastructure deficit. Every intervention we take at the Authority must carefully weigh up the risks, benefits, costs and opportunities.

The last few years have seen the sector undergo change at an extraordinary pace. Thank you for working alongside us to get this balance right as we have designed and implemented our [CME strategy](#) and new tools.

Immense improvements in drinking water safety

While I don't want to steal the thunder from our annual Drinking Water Regulatory Report which will be published very soon, I am extremely proud of what we have managed to achieve together in such a short period of time. When I joined the Authority four years ago, the sector was almost caught in paralysis – the job ahead seemed so large it was hard to pick where to start.

With the firm steer from the Authority, we have tackled our first, and possibly largest, drinking water challenge, which has been to get the basics in place and operating well.

This 'multi-barrier' intervention has seen:

- 400,000+ New Zealanders on town supplies receive safer drinking water
- 60+ rural schools upgraded to address critical safety issues
- 491 rural communities (representing 50,000 people) take up end point treatment through acceptable solutions.

Of course, the job is never done but having been at the sharp end of reforms over the last several years, striving for improvement, I've also learned how important it is to occasionally take a moment, recognise how far we have come and thank those who have contributed to change. I want to thank you for your part in supporting this massive public health improvement. I have no doubt it required fast tracked advice, procurement and on the ground works to bring forward investment that had traditionally sat at the mythical fourth year of long-term plans.

Bringing consistency, savings, and improved outcomes to wastewater treatment

The next area of change the Authority has led that I take pride in is the new wastewater environmental performance standards.

New Zealand was lagging far behind comparable countries in lacking a nationally consistent standard for wastewater treatment, with many having standards in place for over 30 years. Similarly, we were also lagging behind our own local standards, with many treatment plants stuck in the purgatory of delayed consenting under s124 of the RMA.

The new wastewater standards will ensure we can begin tackling the bow wave of consents with certainty. This will see outdated plants join the 21st century in terms of environmental outputs, without breaking the bank. Overall, the standards are projected to save New Zealand rate payers up to \$1bn while driving better environmental outcomes.

The Authority has so much more in the works to build on these achievements and further deliver improved safety, consistency, affordability and service performance. We are just beginning discussions on the NEDS, further wastewater standards and stormwater tools.

There is an enormous amount of work ahead for the sector as we collectively tackle the decades of neglect and deferred investment. These tools will enable this work to be done in a more consistent, cost-effective manner with more certainty of outcomes.

Acknowledging my extremely talented staff – you are in good hands

Finally, I would like to publicly acknowledge the dedicated staff and leadership team I

have worked alongside while at the Authority. You are an extremely talented, driven and knowledgeable bunch.

I would also like to thank the current and previous members of the Authority's Board and Māori Advisory Group – Te Puna. You have trusted my leadership while providing firm and fair governance. This is everything a CEO could want.

The Authority's small but mighty team has achieved so much more than one newsletter could ever capture – but to name a few things:

- we have built the plane while flying it – we reset the Drinking Water Standards, Rules and set up a whole new monitoring system – all while actively regulating
- we have taken our first prosecution – demonstrating we will not flinch when it comes to protecting public health
- we have introduced new measurements to transparently track the performance of water services and start to focus our interventions on where it matters most
- we have navigated a system of change (across our legislation and those we regulate,) and came out the other side with a broadened mandate
- we also secured a stable funding pathway through a combination of Crown funding and levy.

The last two points demonstrate the credibility the Authority has earned since its establishment and the trust the Government and public place in us to continue to deliver benefits going forward. This is the cornerstone for our sector leadership and system oversight mandate.

It has been a privilege leading the Authority for the last four years and I look forward to seeing the amazing things you will achieve.

Thank you and see you soon.

Allan



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