

MEDIA RELEASE

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Waikato Councils Unite to Explore Regional Water Services

Seven Waikato councils have agreed to explore a new way of managing water services. The initiative, called *Waikato Water Done Well*, brings together Waipā, Matamata-Piako, Waitomo, South Waikato, Ōtorohanga, Hauraki, and Taupō District Councils to tackle shared challenges in delivering safe, reliable, and sustainable water services.

The project comes as all councils in New Zealand face a government deadline to decide how their water services will be managed in the future. Under the Government's *Local Water Done Well* legislation, councils must choose the best way to deliver water services for their communities. Each council must consider at least two options and then consult with their community before making a final decision in 2025.

The *Waikato Water Done Well* initiative is one of the options that the seven Waikato councils are exploring.

A Fresh Approach to a Regional Challenge

Multiple independent reports over more than a decade have said that managing water services regionally could save money and improve infrastructure by leveraging scale. This regional model would involve creating a new multi-council organisation—called a Council Controlled Organisation (CCO)—to handle drinking water, wastewater, and, where requested, stormwater services.

Under *Waikato Water Done Well*, participating councils would transfer responsibility for their water services to the new organisation which they will collectively own, and have a say in its strategic priorities.

Community Input Matters

In early 2025, each council will make the *Waikato Water Done Well* model available to the public as part of community consultation.

Next steps

The CCO would be established in mid-2025 and following an implementation period that will support the safe transition of council's water services, it would become operational by mid-2026. A key requirement is that this is seamless from a customer experience perspective.

The outcome of the community consultation and subsequent decisions by each council will determine which councils formally adopt the *Waikato Water Done Well* model.

Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council are also exploring establishing their own CCO, but have been clear that they see a regional model being of benefit at some point in the future.

Selection of quotes from Mayors for use with this media release

South Waikato Mayor Gary Petley

“This is about making sure our communities have the best possible water services for generations to come. By developing the model together, participating councils can deliver a unified approach to water services and enable the region to show leadership on water services delivery for future generations.”

Waipā Mayor Susan O'Regan

“The decision we make next year on the future of water services delivery, will be the largest local government has ever had to make on behalf of its communities.

“Regional collaboration and working together will absolutely be needed as the decision we make will impact our districts for many generations to come.”

Ōtorohanga Mayor Max Baxter

“Ultimately, each council will decide whether to adopt the model after consulting with their community. We encourage everyone to participate in this important process.”

Waitomo Mayor John Robertson

“The coalition government replaced the 3 Waters legislation with the *Local Water Done Well* reform. Regardless of the chosen option for each council, water service delivery will look different to how it is delivered now, and communities are encouraged to participate in this process.”

Hauraki Mayor Toby Adams

“Essentially Local Water Done Well prioritises water asset ownership back with local councils, which is where we always believed it belonged.

The goal now is to work with our local and wider communities to find the solution that will serve this generation and many generations to come – what an opportunity we have in the mighty Waikato. I encourage everyone to get involved in Council’s kōrero in March and April next year.”