**TAUMATA AROWAI**

**FAQs July 2020**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| Why is Taumata Arowai being established? |
| The Government implemented the recommendation from the Inquiry into Havelock North Drinking Water, for the creation of a dedicated, centralised drinking water regulator, which the Three Waters Review also endorsed. Taumata Arowai will have the basic aims of ensuring New Zealand communities have access to safe drinking water and will have an oversight role in improving environmental outcomes from our wastewater and stormwater systems.  |
| What is the Taumata Arowai Establishment Unit? |
| The Taumata Arowai (Water Services Regulator) Establishment Unit has been set up within the Department of Internal Affairs to carry out preliminary work towards the establishment of Taumata Arowai – a new Water Services Regulator – to ensure it is able to fully operate following commencement of the Water Services Bill, expected to be in mid-2021. |
| What will Taumata Arowai do? |
| Taumata Arowai will be Aotearoa's dedicated regulator of drinking water suppliers and have an oversight role in improving environmental outcomes from our wastewater and stormwater systems. Taumata Arowai will be a fit-for-purpose body that regulates and answers to all of Aotearoa. The new drinking water regulatory system will include assessing and reporting on the performance of drinking water suppliers (except domestic household supplies) to ensure all New Zealand communities have access to safe drinking water. |
| What is the significance of the regulator’s name, Taumata Arowai? |
| The name Taumata Arowai, conveys the weight, responsibility and authority of the regulator. Taumata is a term associated with a summit, symposium or congress. Taumata invokes a sense of protection, leadership and wisdom. Aro means to give attention to, to focus on, or be in the presence of. Wai is water.    |
| What type of organisation will Taumata Arowai be? |
| Taumata Arowai will be a standalone Crown agent with a dedicated focus on regulating drinking water, and with an oversight role relating to wastewater and stormwater. A Crown agent is a category of Crown entity with a Minister-appointed board. Crown entities are part of the state sector and are owned by the Crown.  |
| What is the work that Taumata Arowai is currently doing? |
| The Taumata Arowai (Water Services Regulator) Establishment Unit, is currently in design, planning and engagement mode. Several reference and advisory groups have been (and are yet to be) established to work in partnership, gain insights and feedback. The establishment team will be working right across the water sector, with Iwi/Māori and stakeholder partners to help develop brand fundamentals, guidance material and standards etc. |
| What will be Taumata Arowai’s statutory objectives? |
| The *Taumata Arowai – the Water Services Regulator Bill* sets out Taumata Arowai’s statutory objectives. These include:* Promote safe drinking water and improved public health outcomes
* Effectively administer the drinking water regulatory system
* Strengthen compliance, monitoring, and enforcement relating to drinking water regulation
* Build and maintain capability among drinking water suppliers and across the wider industry
* Give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, to the extent that Te Mana o te Wai applies to the functions and duties of Taumata Arowai
* Provide oversight of, and advice on the regulation, management, and environmental performance of wastewater and stormwater networks
* Promote public understanding of the environmental performance of wastewater and stormwater networks.
 |
| When will Taumata Arowai come into existence and when will it be taking over from the Ministry of Health? |
| Taumata Arowai will exist as a legal entity on commencement of the *Taumata Arowai – Water Services Regulator Act*. This is anticipated to occur in late 2020. Taumata Arowai will take over from the Ministry of Health when it is fully operational following commencement of the second act known as the Water Services Act, expected to be in mid-2021. |
| How will Taumata Arowai demonstrate its commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi?   |
| Taumata Arowai is committed to resetting and improving relationships with Treaty partners and intends to design and build with this at the forefront.  The enabling legislation requires Taumata Arowai to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai.  The Establishment Unit is currently engaging with iwi/Māori to work through how it will embed Te Mana o Te Wai in its decision making and how it behaves.  This will require a close relationship between Taumata Arowai and Treaty partners and kaitiaki who are best placed to advise on the tikanga and mātauranga which underpin Te Mana o te Wai.The Māori Advisory Group will provide support and guidance to the Board, the Chief Executive and the organisation to assist in this. |
| Which water supplies will be regulated by Taumata Arowai? |
| Every drinking water supply, except domestic household supplies.  |
| As a drinking water supplier, when will we need to meet new regulations? |
| Every drinking water supplier (excluding domestic household supplies) must provide safe drinking water when Taumata Arowai is able to fully operate, following commencement of the Water Services Bill, expected to be in mid-2021. Every drinking water supplier must be registered by mid-2022. All drinking water suppliers that are currently regulated, and those that supply more than 500 people (that are not currently regulated) must meet all regulatory requirements by mid-2021. Suppliers serving fewer than 500 people are not required to meet the new regulatory duties until mid-2026.  |
| Will existing Drinking Water Assessors be employed by Taumata Arowai? |
| Taumata Arowai is developing a new operating model that takes account of the outcomes and accountabilities it must deliver to under relevant legislation. Once the organisation design, and position descriptions are finalised, then external advertising will begin for new positions in the organisation. Existing Drinking Water Assessors may apply for any new positions they have the skills and capability to undertake.  |
| Will Taumata Arowai be employing engineers? And if so what level of expertise will be required? |
| As a regulator our focus will primarily be on recruiting regulatory capability. We will have the need for technical expertise including engineering and we are currently considering options on how to source that expertise for when it is required. |
| Will Water Safety Plans be the same or different? |
| The basic requirements for Water Safety Plans will remain the same and will be set out in the Water Services Bill and regulations. However, there may be some differences in the requirements, to ensure that what is required takes account of the size and complexity of the supplier. |
| What’s happening with drinking water standards? |
| The drinking water standards are being reviewed and redesigned, however will initially be based on the existing standards. Some changes may be made in future years. |
| What support is Taumata Arowai expected to give small suppliers to assist them in providing safe drinking water? |
| Taumata Arowai is engaging with a wide range of people and organisations in the water sector and is seeking feedback and insights from them. This will assist the development of technical guidance and other material that will assist water suppliers to achieve compliance. The aim will be to produce pragmatic and user-friendly guides.  |
| How will Taumata Arowai work with councils to ensure communities in their districts or regions have access to safe drinking water? |
| Taumata Arowai will work closely and collaboratively with councils on developing approaches to legislative requirements under the new regulatory regime. |
| Will councils be responsible for making sure the output of small rural water schemes in their districts meets the drinking water standards? |
| No, this will be the role of the regulator. Councils will however work with their communities to ensure they have access to safe and quality drinking water.  |
| Why will Taumata Arowai be concerning itself with rural community water supplies when they’ve always been managed locally? |
| Evidence indicates that some small drinking water suppliers face difficulties in providing safe and acceptable drinking water to their communities. Taumata Arowai’s starting position is that rural communities should not be second-class citizens when it comes to the safety and quality of their drinking water. To this end, Taumata Arowai will work with rural drinking water schemes to ensure they are aware of their obligations to provide safe drinking water, and that they have practical technical advice on how to affordably do so.  |