1. A CASE FOR CHANGE
This Government has ambitions to significantly improve the safety, quality, resilience, accessibility, and performance of three waters services, in a way that is efficient and affordable for New Zealanders. This is critical for:
- public health and wellbeing;
- environmental outcomes;
- economic growth and employment;
- housing and urban development;
- adapting to the impacts of climate change;
- mitigating the effects of natural hazards.
Government also wants to ensure it delivers on Treaty-related obligations, including by improving outcomes for iwi/Māori in relation to three waters service delivery.
Integral to this is effective infrastructure delivery, underpinned by an efficient, high-performing, financially-sustainable, and transparent three waters system.

2. KEY DESIGN FEATURES
- Maintaining local authority ownership of water services entities;
- Protecting against privatisation;
- Retaining influence of local authorities and mana whenua over strategic and performance expectations;
- Providing the necessary balance sheet separations from local authorities; and
- An integrated regulatory system.

3. A NEW WATER SERVICES SYSTEM

4. OBJECTIVES FOR THE CROWN/MĀORI RELATIONSHIP
Enabling greater strategic influence to exercise rangatiratanga over water services delivery.

5. A PARTNERSHIP-BASED REFORM
Government will continue to work in partnership with iwi/Māori and local authorities.

Further decisions are yet to be taken by Cabinet on the arrangement for transition to, and implementing, the new system.
A new system for three waters service delivery
The number and boundary of entities needs to balance scale with other factors

1. FACTORS CONSIDERED TO DETERMINE NUMBER AND BOUNDARIES
A range of factors have been analysed to help determine how many entities there should be, and their boundaries:

- Potential to achieve scale benefits from a larger water service delivery entity to a broader population/customer base.
- Alignment of geographical boundaries to encompass natural communities of interest, belonging and identity including rohe/takiwa.
- Relationship with relevant regulatory boundaries including to enable water to be managed from source to the sea - ki uta ki tai.

Applied economic analysis, informed by international evidence, provides further confidence that each entity would need to serve a connected population of at least 600,000 to 800,000 to achieve the desired level of scale.

The preferred approach is to create four new water services entities, and to enable all communities to benefit from reform.

2. PROPOSED BOUNDARIES
Government has agreed to a preferred set of entity boundaries. However, the Government remains interested in continuing discussion with local government and iwi/Māori most affected by the proposed boundary choices. In particular:

- South Island entity: Whether there should be a single entity covering the whole of the South Island, or instead take an approach that uses the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.

The map highlights the recommended boundaries.

3. OUR INTENTION IS THAT ALL COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM REFORM
Latest estimates indicate that the amount of investment required to:

- provide for future population growth
- replace and refurbish existing infrastructure
- upgrade three waters assets to meet drinking water and environmental standards

is in the order of $120 billion to $185 billion over the next 30 to 40 years.

4. PROJECTED HOUSEHOLD COSTS 2051

5. POTENTIAL IMPACTS
Difference in household costs
Average household costs for most councils on a standalone basis in 2051 are likely to range from between $1,910 to $8,690.
The scale of investment required between now and 2051, would require average household costs to increase by between three to 13 times in real terms for rural councils, between two and eight times for provincial councils and between 1.3 and seven times for metropolitan councils.

Current household costs
Currently there are a wide range of current (2019) average household costs.

Potential economic impact of reform
The economic impact assessment estimates the impact of a material step up in investment in connection with reform, relative to the level of investment that might be expected in the absence of reform.

Change relative to counter-factual, 2022-2051

Source: Deloitte Three Waters Reform Economic Impact Assessment 2021