DIA Three Waters

Rural water supplies

Brian Hanna:

Kia ora koutou katoa, ko Brian Hannah ahau. I am the independent Chair of the Three Waters Steering Committee, and I’m here with Mr Bill Bayfield, Chief Executive of Taumata Arowai, to talk about rural water supplies.

Bill, you’ve spent a lot of time working with small communities so, what are small and rural water supplies, and why are they so different?

Bill Bayfield:

Well, all across New Zealand, there are thousands of small water schemes of all shapes and sizes and the majority of them are rural. These schemes provide water for small towns, communities, right down to collections of rural households. A few are provided by councils, others have some council support but most are owned and operated by private communities. Some very small supplies, just supply three or four households or baches

from a local bore or spring.

Brian Hanna:

So Bill, as the drinking water regulator, how will you be working with these small supplies you keep these people safe?

Bill Bayfield:

In bigger cities or towns, council-supplied drinking water is treated before it goes into the pipes that take it to your house, but for these small communities who are supplying water,

it’s equally important that we have safe drinking water, but we don’t need to treat water that for example’s going to be used for stock or irrigation. Or force expensive treatment systems on small numbers of households.

So over the last year, our team at Taumata Arowai have been working with the rural stakeholders and communities to come up with practical,

cost-effective solutions to keep New Zealanders safe. In many cases, this will look like a unit that’s bolted to the side of your house that treats your water as it enters your house.

That way you, and your neighbours, all know that the water you are drinking from the tap is safe. And we’re going to have a range of these things. We’ll call them acceptable solutions and they will be able to be put in and serviced by your local trade person.

We’ve got 4 years to work with the small communities to help you find the one that works for you. And that’s great because we’ll need it. But Brian, there’s a little bit of a concern in the community that we are going to take these supplies off their communities. And we couldn’t and I think that needs addressing as it seems to stem back to the recent work of the three waters reforms.

Brian Hanna:

Yeah, you’re right Bill, and this is a misunderstanding. What the Government is doing with three waters reforms is working with local government on the council-owned supplies to ensure we can provide these affordably. I can re-assure small communities, if you own and operate your own supply, you’ll continue to own and operate your supply. The Government has just asked Bill and his team to ensure you continue to do that safely.

Bill Bayfield:

When it comes to small or rural supplies, whether they are private, council-owned, or a mixture, we know how important local knowledge is. Together, the team at Taumata Arowai and the team in the three waters reform want to keep working with you to ensure this continues long into the future.

Kia ora tatau. Kia ora.