

# A new system for three waters service delivery

## 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.

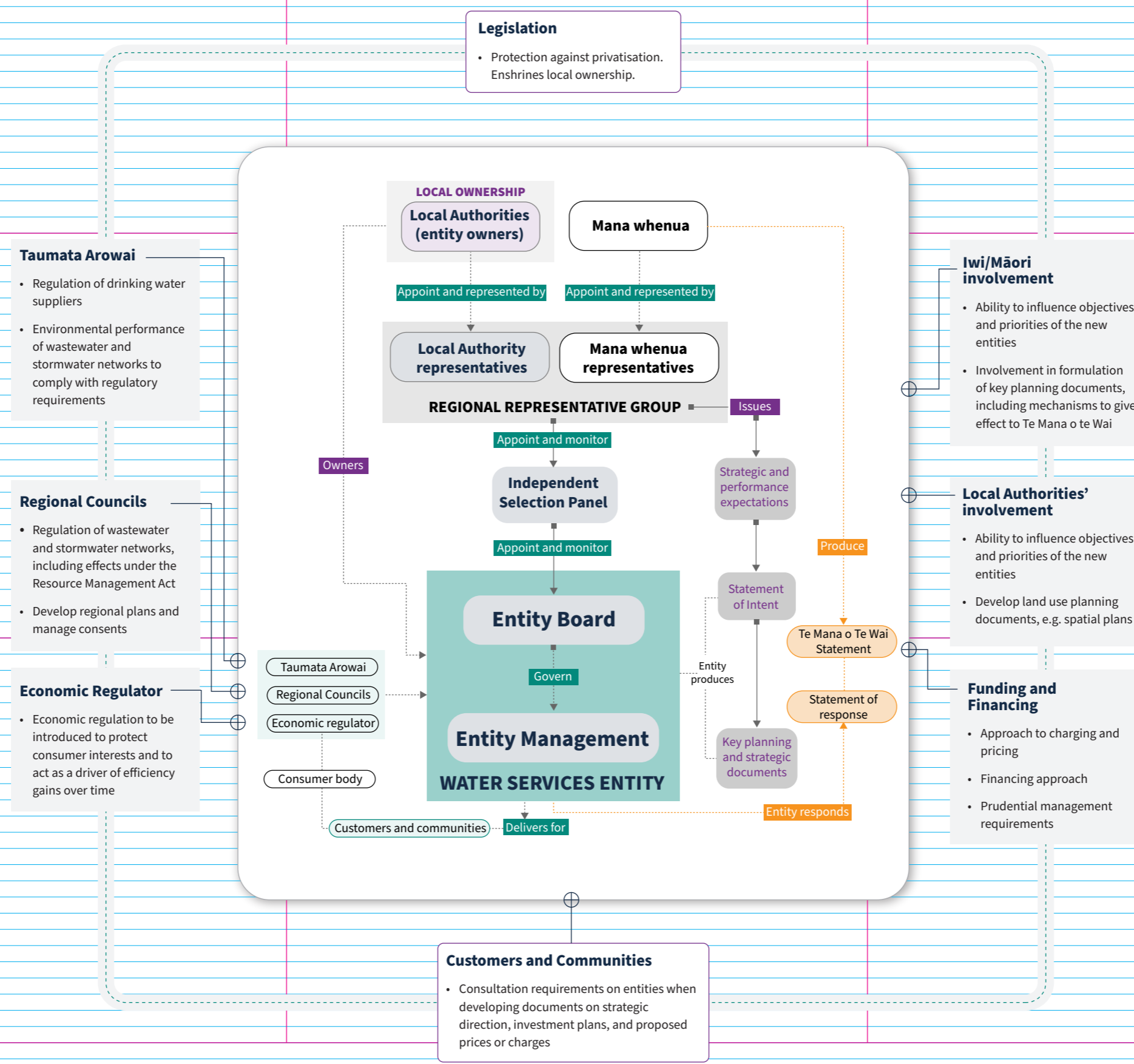
Government also wants to ensure it delivers on Treaty-related obligations, including by improving outcomes for iwi/Māori in relation to three waters service delivery.

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.

- A** Integration of iwi/Māori rights and interests within a wider system.
- B** Reflection of a holistic te ao Māori perspective.
- C** Supporting clear account and ensure roles, responsibilities, and accountability for the relationship with the Treaty partner.
- D** Improving outcomes at a local level to enable a step change improvement in delivery of water services for iwi/Māori.

## 5. A PARTNERSHIP-BASED REFORM

- Government will continue to work in partnership with iwi/Māori and local authorities.
- A large scale communication effort is required to ensure local government support reform.
- Further decisions are yet to be taken by Cabinet on the arrangement for transition to, and implementing, the new system.

**Iwi/Māori involvement**

- Ability to influence objectives and priorities of the new entities
- Involvement in formulation of key planning documents, including mechanisms to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai

**Local Authorities' involvement**

- Ability to influence objectives and priorities of the new entities
- Develop land use planning documents, e.g. spatial plans

**Funding and Financing**

- Approach to charging and pricing
- Financing approach
- Prudential management requirements

**Customers and Communities**

- Consultation requirements on entities when developing documents on strategic direction, investment plans, and proposed prices or charges

# 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:

- A** Potential to achieve scale benefits from a larger water service delivery entity to a broader population/customer base.
- B** Alignment of geographical boundaries to encompass natural communities of interest, belonging and identity including rohe/takiwā.
- C** 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:

- 2 Taranaki region**  
Which entity would include the Taranaki region, taking into account ki uta ki tai, whakapapa connections, and economic geography/community of interests.
- 1 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.
- 3 Hauraki Gulf**  
Whether to include other districts surrounding the Hauraki Gulf, enabling a more integrated approach to the management of the Hauraki Gulf marine catchment.

**The map highlights the recommended boundaries.**

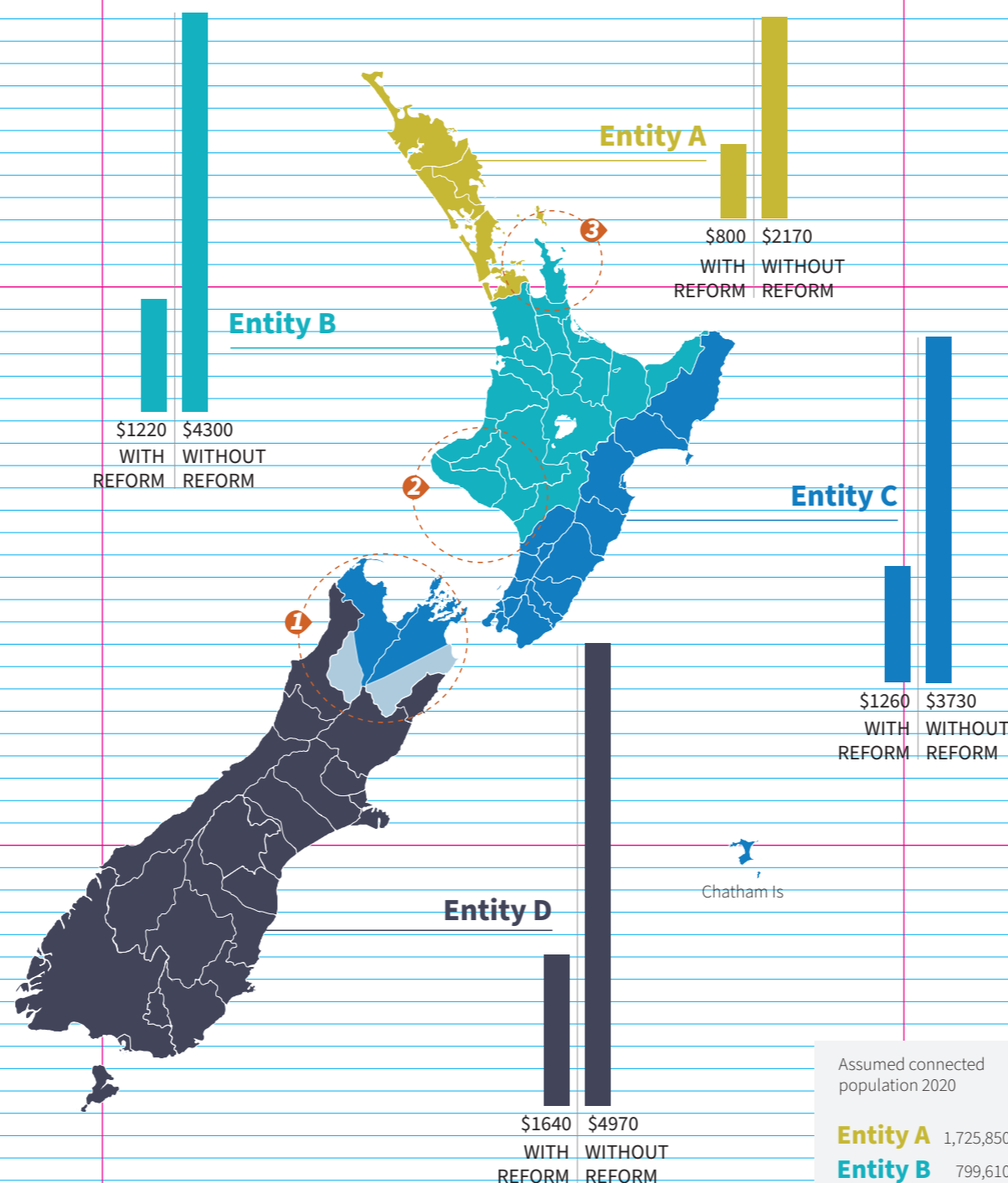
## 3. OUR INTENTION IS THAT ALL COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM REFORM

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



The figures presented above for household bills with and without reform set out what an average household would be likely to pay for three waters services in 2051, in today's dollars, based on analysis by the Water Industry Commission for Scotland.

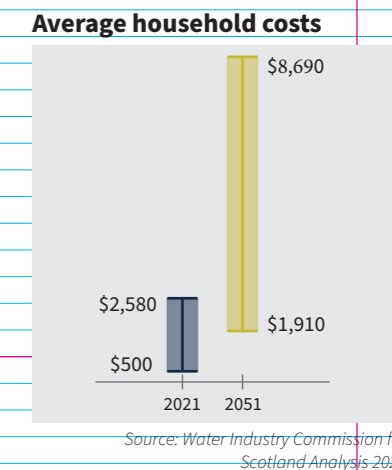
A weighted average figure is presented for household bill estimates without reform, to account for the wide variance between council pricing policies. This weighted average figure reflects the proportion of the connected population that resides in each council area relative to neighbouring councils within the relevant water services entity.

## 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 1.5 and seven times for metropolitan councils.



### Current household costs

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

	LOW	HIGH	MEDIAN	MEAN
Metro	\$500	\$1,920	\$1,050	\$1,120
Provincial	\$610	\$2,550	\$1,120	\$1,300
Rural	\$210	\$2,580	\$1,340	\$1,390

Source: Water Industry Commission for Scotland Analysis 2021

Current costs are not necessarily a good reflection of what funding is required to meet the full costs of economic depreciation (that is, to provide resources for asset maintenance and renewal).

### 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

Net change in GDP p.a. over 30 years	▲	<b>0.3% to 0.5%</b>
Present value increase in GDP	▲	<b>\$14b to 23b</b>
Average increase in FTEs	▲	<b>5,850 to 9,260</b>
Increase in average wages	▲	<b>0.2% to 0.3%</b>
Present value increase in taxes	▲	<b>\$4b to \$6b</b>

Source: Deloitte Three Waters Reform Economic Impact Assessment 2021