

1 November 2022

Citizens' Assembly
c/- Elizabeth Drayton and Caitlyn Jagger

Kia ora

Response to the 2022 Watercare Citizens' Assembly's recommendations

Thank you for investing the time and effort to understand and provide reasoned and thoughtful proposed solutions to one of the most important questions our city faces: *what should be Auckland's next source (or sources) of water?*

I hope you enjoyed being part of our inaugural Citizens' Assembly. I certainly was impressed by your reflections on the final day, ranging from a deep appreciation for the opportunity to influence such an important future decision, to acknowledging the value of your learning about the world of water, to being grateful for new friendships formed through this process.

Having had the opportunity to study your recommendations, our responses to each of your recommendations is as follows:

Recommendation 1: Recycled water

<p><u>What the Assembly said:</u></p> <p><i>We recommend the implementation of direct recycled water as the next source of water for Auckland. Engaging the Auckland public in education on the safety and quality of the water is necessary to facilitate acceptance.</i></p> <p><u>What we understand:</u></p> <p>The assembly wants Watercare to plan for direct recycled water as the next source of water for the Auckland metropolitan network after 2040. We note that this recommendation had unanimous support from the assembly.</p> <p>This source was chosen because it is more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than the other options, as well as providing</p>	<p><u>What we will do:</u></p> <p>We accept this recommendation.</p> <p>Our commitment is to stand up a detailed programme – from strategic planning to building – to work out the details that will support the realisation of direct recycled water as a source of drinking water for people on the Auckland metropolitan network. We note that there are no sources of resilient water that will be cheaper to develop than our current sources. Any new source will cost more than we currently pay.</p> <p>The direct recycled water programme will cover three key programmes of work, which will be publicly visible in Watercare's servicing strategies and asset management plans. This programme will be published by 2024.</p> <p><u>Operational commitments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will complete the Watercare reuse advanced water treatment pilot - for both non-potable and potable reuse. 2. The pilot activities will collect data and help us understand: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. water quality, b. plant requirements (breakdown and maintenance), c. operational costs, d. emerging contaminants of concern,
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<p>security of supply to the city. The importance of equal and fair access to water as a human right as articulated by mana whenua was taken on board when deciding on this final recommendation.</p> <p>The assembly wants education on this water source to begin immediately. The assembly would not have recommended direct recycling if it weren't for the understanding that there is enough time to get people on board. The assembly have also noted that the naming of the new water source is important too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. lab testing ability, f. cost of testing, g. management of by-products, h. disposal of by-products, and i. the environmental effects of disposal. <p>3. If the water does not meet quality requirements (health or environmental standards) or is prohibitively costly, we will re-evaluate direct recycled water as a source.</p> <p><u>Regulatory commitments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will work with the following organisations to develop recycled water as a drinking water source: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Taumata Arowai, for drinking water quality standards and recognition of reuse as a drinking water source. b. The Ministry of Health, to ensure health impacts are known, understood, and not negative. c. The Ministry for the Environment, for the discharge of residuals, and d. Auckland Council to support resource consents under the Resource Management Act (or relevant acts within the new legislation). <p><u>Community engagement commitments:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will invest in a number of pilot project to gradually introduce the concept to the people of Auckland. 2. We will develop an education plan and policy to support understanding and acceptance of recycled water. 3. We will monitor progress towards community acceptance using best practice methods. 4. We will partner with mana whenua for development of the reuse programme to support the citizens' assembly recommendations ensuring that we embed tikanga in the process.
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Recommendation 2: Desalination

<p><u>What the Assembly said:</u></p> <p><i>We recommend Watercare continue research & investigation studies to understand the feasibility of desalination for the future as we believe it may be a required supplementary source if it is projected that we will not be able to meet our water needs with recycled water only.</i></p>	<p><u>What we will do:</u></p> <p>We accept this recommendation.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor all water source technologies. We will ensure we stay abreast of innovation in desalination methodologies that may reduce environmental impacts and reassess accordingly.</p> <p><u>Research and Investigation:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will continuously review international best practice on desalination.
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<p><u>What we understand:</u></p> <p>The assembly is concerned that droughts are going to be a more frequent part of our future and wants to ensure that desalination remains an option. The assembly does not want to invest a lot of resources into this option.</p>	<p>2. We will monitor the environmental and health impacts of desalination in other parts of the world and include desalination research in our management plans, where appropriate.</p> <p><u>Community engagement:</u></p> <p>We will provide ongoing updates about our research and learnings regarding desalination on our website and in any pilot desalination plant that is developed.</p>
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Recommendation 3: water efficiency and education

<p><u>What the Assembly said:</u></p> <p><i>The recommendation is that Watercare ‘provide education and resources to consumers in reducing water usage.’ The assembly also notes that ‘rain tanks can play a positive part in reducing water usage’ and there was support for education ‘around rain water tanks, but the decision and implementation of them should be at the discretion of homeowners (minimal resources to promote rain tanks).</i></p> <p><u>What we understand:</u></p> <p>Assembly members recognise that water is a taonga and want Aucklanders to use less water so the finite resource will go further. Assembly members believe the reason people don’t save more water is because there is an information gap in how to reduce water use. Assembly members want Watercare to do more to educate Aucklanders on how to use less water. The assembly wants to support the installation of rain tanks through education but not through mandates or financial incentives.</p>	<p><u>What we will do:</u></p> <p>We accept this recommendation.</p> <p>Water literacy and water efficiency will always be a key area of focus for Watercare but we understand that the assembly has have asked us to invest more in this space. We will put more resources into education and engagement activities with the intention of driving down water use.</p> <p><u>Education and resources: ongoing</u></p> <p>We will invest in the following initiatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ongoing water wise campaigns to educate customers on ways to be water efficient 4. Introducing an app to promote better oversight of residential water use, including water efficiency tips 5. Investigating a similar style of process as the citizens’ assembly for a younger audience eg. youth summit as a way to promote water literacy and water efficiency for rangatahi 6. Investigating how to bring water education into the school curriculum, and should the right model or opportunity be developed we commit to co-funding this with an appropriate partner organisation. <p><u>Reducing water usage: 2022-2025</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are committed to targets to reduce usage in accordance with our water efficiency plan to 2025 and Auckland Water Strategy to 2050: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reducing loss from leakage b. Improving data oversight from source to tap, including a significant investment in smart meters for commercial and residential customers c. Reducing pressure in our network
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	<p>d. Improving residential, community and commercial water efficiency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We will continue to work with commercial customers to enhance water efficiency in different industries so that we support economic growth while reducing water use. ▪ We will continue to support rain tank adoption and work with the Auckland Council to reduce barriers to rain tank installation, including promoting rain tanks for gardeners and potentially commercial customers
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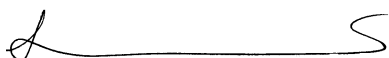
Minority Report on the public involvement in decision-making

<p><u>What the Assembly said:</u></p> <p><i>We recommend that 2-3 people from the Assembly sit on Watercare's steering committee for future water sources</i></p> <p><u>What we understand:</u></p> <p>The members gained a lot of knowledge during the assembly. The authors of the minority report see an opportunity to support the realisation of the recommendations by continuing to be involved in the development of a future water source; that they might be a part of the education and engagement of Aucklanders. There is also some concern that without representation of this group, momentum may stall.</p>	<p><u>What we will do:</u></p> <p>We accept this recommendation.</p> <p>Our suggestion is that a nominated sub-set of representatives of the citizens' assembly be invited to public board sessions where water resource updates are discussed. This topic is on the agenda twice a year.</p>
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Tēnā koe mōu i whai wāhanga ai ki te wānanga i ētahi taunakitanga uaua, nui hoki mō tō hapori te take.

Again, we thank you for making complex and important recommendations on behalf of your community.

Ngā mihi nui,



Margaret Devlin

Board Chair

Watercare Services Limited