



26 February 2021

Liz Craig
Committee Chairperson
Health Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Ms Craig

WATER SERVICES BILL

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Water Services Bill (the Bill) currently before the Health Committee.

We support the Bill and are pleased to see its progression through the House. We agree with the Government's comprehensive reform of the drinking water regulatory system, with targeted reforms to improve the regulation and performance of wastewater and stormwater networks. As we have previously advised the Committee, we have been concerned that, across New Zealand, compliance with standards has been unacceptably low and that the array of regulators involved in drinking water has meant dispersed accountability and obfuscated transparency. We consider the Bill will support improvements in this area. We are pleased to see the lessons from the Havelock North Inquiry are being actioned through this Bill, as well as Taumata Arowai – the Water Services Regulator Bill.

Occupational regulation

Subpart 10 of the Bill outlines authorisations. We support the requirement for operators to be authorised and look forward to the detail of this being outlined in regulation. As the Committee will be aware, many engineers are involved in the design, operation, and management (notably asset management) of the drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater waters (three waters) system.

Currently, there is no mandatory regulation of engineers in New Zealand. Chartered Professional Engineer registration is a voluntary quality mark that indicates an engineer's competence to perform complex engineering activities. While it is not a mandatory registration scheme, some legislation in New Zealand restricts certain work to only be performed by a Chartered Professional Engineer.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) are currently undertaking policy work on the occupational regulation of engineers, including restricting certain engineering work. We understand it is MBIE's intent to design a system of occupational regulation that is fit for all engineers, not only those working within the building and construction industry. Should the authorisation of engineers in the three waters system be enabled in regulation, we ask that this Committee, as well as the Department of Internal Affairs and the new regulator Taumata Arowai, ensure this regulation is aligned with the current Chartered Professional Engineer scheme and MBIE's work on the occupational regulation of engineers. This will support cohesion across the profession and reduce compliance costs.

Implementation

With so much work ahead in the reform of the three waters system and the enactment of this Bill, we look forward to continuing to be involved. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me by emailing richard.templer@engineeringnz.org or 021 22 000 50.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. Templer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and the last name "Templer" clearly visible.

Dr Richard Templer
Chief Executive