



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
HAMILTON

1 October 2021

Hon. Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Local Government
Parliament

Via email:

n.mahuta@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister Mahuta

Three Waters Reform Formal Feedback to Government

Hamilton City Council has provided the attached feedback on elements of the Three Waters Reform process but wishes to express its disappointment with the process set out by Government to date.

Hamilton City Council does not support in its entirety the 3 -waters model currently proposed by Government. In addition, the many unanswered questions submitted by this council and others in the sector along with the lack of important detail in most areas continues to be of concern.

Hamilton City Council encourages Government to continue its reform programme by collaborating with us and the Local Government Sector to agree on an ownership and governance model that will be acceptable to us, and meet the expectation of our communities.

We specifically seek a commitment to addressing the issues of Governance, Community Consultation, Finance and Local Voice identified in the attached, as well as assurance that formal, effective and transparent consultation with our community will be undertaken before any structural changes to Council's management of Three Waters services.

We further note the compressed timeline and lack of detail on critical elements of the Government's Three Waters Reform process has impacted Council's ability to provide fully comprehensive feedback. We have had no opportunity to formally consult with our community, and there are significant gaps in the information available from Government. Council emphasises our feedback reflects an initial view from elected members, on still-developing information, and must not be perceived as reflecting the views of our wider community.

We have identified shortcomings and concerns in the proposals but have had insufficient time to develop solutions or preferred options. We reinforce our feedback messaging that aspects such as governance, community involvement and financial structures require further expert work and a commitment to partnership with local government to address. It is disappointing, and a missed opportunity, that the proposals do not include alternative options on the key issues of ownership and governance.

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The process for future formal engagement and genuine consultation with our community prior to any final decision has not been made available by Government. The provision of robust and detailed information to enable informed engagement is a critical issue and one which is not addressed within the proposal information to date. Financial modelling on a 30-year window provides insufficient data to understand shorter timelines or localised financial impacts for our residents.

The lack of detail in the proposals has meant Council has been forced to provide feedback based, in some cases, on assumptions or perceptions of likely impacts of the proposals. This would inevitably impact the direction of our feedback if these assumptions are wrong.

Council remains supportive of the goals envisaged by Government. Hamilton City Council is continually seeking better environmental and public health outcomes, and greater efficiencies within Three Waters delivery, in its day-to-day operations.

We look forward to Government's response to the national feedback in this phase and the development of refined and amended proposals. We look forward to the opportunity to provide more detailed feedback in coming stages of this process, should the government proceed, and as more certainty and clarity emerges.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paula Southgate". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paula" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Southgate".

Paula Southgate
Mayor of Hamilton