



4 March 2020

Committee Secretariat
Health Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Email: Health@parliament.govt.nz

To the Health Committee

SUBMISSION ON TAUMATA AROWAI—THE WATER SERVICES REGULATOR BILL

Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to present our submission on Taumata Arowai—the Water Services Regulator Bill and looks forward to submitting further on upcoming legislation within this suite of reforms.

QLDC does not wish to appear before the committee to speak to its submission. It should be noted that this submission reflects the position of officers and has not been ratified by full council.

If the Committee requires any further information or clarification, please contact QLDCSubmissions@qldc.govt.nz.

Yours faithfully



Mike Theelen
Chief Executive

SUBMISSION ON TAUMATA AROWAI—THE WATER SERVICES REGULATOR BILL

Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) supports the intent of this Bill to establish Taumata Arowai—the Water Services Regulator as a new Crown agent to oversee, administer and enforce the drinking water regulatory system.

The Queenstown Lakes is a district with high visitor numbers and carries significant responsibility for the reputation of New Zealand tourism. The safety of drinking water supplies is of importance on a scale larger than the resident population would suggest. On a peak day the Queenstown Lakes district's resident population of 39,500 more than doubles in size to 79,300 people. Any reduction in the quality of our water services that could lead to ill health in the district would have significant national and international reputational ramifications.

We therefore welcome the Bill as the first of a larger structure of changes to implement system-wide reforms to the regulation of drinking water and source water, and targeted reforms to improve the regulation and performance of wastewater and stormwater networks.

With further Bills to be introduced that will contain much of the detail of the operation of Taumata Arowai, in this submission QLDC seeks to lend support to positions taken by Water NZ and SOLGM.

1.0 Board Experience – *Clause 12*

1.1 QLDC agrees with Water NZ and SOLGM's recommendations for relevant experience of board members be defined.

1.1.1 QLDC supports the position of Water NZ that the experience of governance and operation of water services be specified explicitly under *Clause 12* of the Bill.

1.1.2 SOLGM's recommendation that community engagement experience be a prerequisite for members of the board would build trust between communities and the regulator and set a path for the facilitation of meaningful consultation.

2.0 Definitions – *Clause 4*

2.1 QLDC agrees with the recommendation put forward by Water NZ that certain definitions under *Clause 4 – Interpretation* be amended for clarity.

2.1.1 QLDC agrees with Water NZ's recommended change to the wording of the definition of 'domestic self-supplier', removing the terms 'stand-alone' and 'single'. Water NZ's suggestion below is suitable:

Domestic self-supplier means a domestic supply of water not supplied by a drinking water supplier.

2.1.2 The term 'drinking water supply scheme' should be clearly defined as this definition may have a significant impact on how the legislation is regulated. The clarification of this term will also allow those with private schemes a framework to understand whether they would be classified as domestic self-suppliers or drinking water suppliers and therefore what their obligations regulations will be.

3.0 Scale of Private Water Schemes Within Regions

3.1 QLDC acknowledges that although potentially outside of the scope of this Bill, Taumata Arowai should be tasked with ascertaining - or at the very least giving an indication of the process of ascertaining - the scale of private water schemes (as per agreed definitions) throughout individual regulatory areas prior to the regulatory processes being defined.

3.1.1 QLDC shares SOLGM's position that Central Government's intentions with regard to cost recovery from the regulatory community should be clarified. This could be undertaken by the Establishment Unit as part of establishing an operating model prior to this Bill being enacted later this year. With the intent established there would be further clarity as to the extent to which private water schemes would be affected.

3.1.2 Where private water schemes are a permitted activity within the District Plan or are long established, very few records are held of the number of these schemes in operation. Large scale data gathering throughout the district prior to establishing regulatory functions will have a significant impact on the local government planning and budgeting processes.

3.1.3 The financial burden of ascertaining the number, scale and categorisation of individual schemes must be taken into account as part of these extremely important and necessary reforms impacting on the safety of New Zealand's water.