

WATER YOU RECKON?

Have your say on one of the biggest decisions in decades

The Wairarapa and Tararua Mayors are calling on residents of their respective districts to indicate their preference on one of the biggest council decisions in decades – how drinking water, wastewater and stormwater will be managed in the future.

South Wairarapa, Carterton, Masterton, and Tararua district councils are consulting on whether water services should be managed under a new council-controlled water organisation for Wairarapa-Tararua or continue under existing approaches.

The change is part of the Government's Local Water Done Well (LWDW) reforms, with all four district councils consulting separately with their communities.

"The way water services are managed is changing due to legislation, and we want our communities to tell us which option they prefer," Tararua Mayor Tracey Collis, who chairs the Advisory Oversight Group for LWDW, said.

"The focus on Local Water Done Well is on delivering better water services and being financially sustainable.

"Each district has major infrastructure projects ahead, and councils face increasing responsibilities and regulations for drinking water, wastewater, and, in the future, stormwater—under the Government's new regulator, the Water Services Authority - Taumata Arowai, and the economic regulator - the Commerce Commission.

"We need to be well-prepared to meet our communities' water needs. Ratepayers and councils are being financially strained by the requirement of improved level of services, managing growth and the replacement of old assets that are at the end of their useful life and failing.

"Water services are a big part of what councils do, and this upcoming change is a huge and intergenerational decision - one that won't just affect us today, but also our children, their grandchildren, and the future generations to come. The choice we make now will shape the future of something essential to us all—water.

"We cannot make a decision on this without hearing what our communities think, so we need people to share their views on their council's proposal.

"Each council will have its own consultation document with its own range of options - but each will include the same information on the Wairarapa - Tararua proposal, as this is the shared option representing a multi-council-controlled organisation, we are each considering"

CONSULTATION OPEN FROM 14 MARCH TO 22 APRIL 2025

We're coming to you. There will be information sessions across the District, running from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at the following venues:

17 March	Dannevirke Town Hall
24 March	Pongaroa War Memorial Hall
27 March	Norsewood War Memorial Hall
31 March	Eketāhuna Community Hall
2 April	Woodville Sports Stadium
4 April	Dannevirke Town Hall
8 April	Pahiatua Town Hall

OTHER COUNCIL DATES

Carterton District Council

Consultation open from 14 March - 22 April.
Learn more at www.cdc.govt.nz

Masterton District Council

Consultation open from 21 March - 22 April.
Learn more at www.mstn.govt.nz

South Wairarapa District Council

Consultation open from 7 March - 6 April.
Learn more at www.swdc.govt.nz

OPTION ONE - WAIRARAPA & TARARUA

A multi-council owned water organisation (CCO)

A jointly owned water organisation by the three Wairarapa district councils (Masterton, South Wairarapa, Carterton) and Tararua District Council.

These councils have similar sized communities, geography and climate, face similar challenges and share iwi cultural ties. This follows work in 2024 where models were also considered with the Manawatū-Whanganui councils, and the decision was to pursue the joint option with the Wairarapa councils.

Proposed option

OPTION TWO - STAND ALONE (SINGLE COUNCIL)

The existing approach for delivering water services

This option would see Council continuing to manage and deliver the district's water services, but under a different set of regulations. However, as outlined below and in the consultation document, this option is financially difficult to achieve because we will need to meet new Local Water Done Well sustainability requirements. Council would have to make major changes to its water infrastructure projects and their timing to make it compliant with the new rules.

We wouldn't typically consult on an option that is difficult to meet legal requirements. However, Central Government requires all councils in New Zealand to consult on its 'existing approach'.

Pros

of the joint Wairarapa and Tararua option are:

More affordable for water users in comparison to Option 2 (financial modelling available in the Consultation Document).

By working together, the Wairarapa and Tararua councils can make their water services more resilient and stable.

The water services reform opens up opportunities for Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) to access more funding and operate more efficiently.

Allows for greater investment in water infrastructure—far beyond what councils can currently afford on their own.

Better services and job opportunities for local businesses.

With many resource consents coming up for renewal across the Wairarapa-Tararua region, a larger entity could bring greater efficiency and cost savings.

Council will have less debt because our assets will be sold to the CCO and Council will repay existing water services debt.



Cons

of the joint Wairarapa and Tararua option are:

Setting up a water services company for multiple areas is going to be complex.

All borrowing needs approval, and there's some risk involved with a multi-council organisation's debt levels and the agreement on those levels when it gets started.

There's also the chance that councils might lose their in-house expertise and understanding of water services over time.

Loss of control over the direct management of water assets and how services are delivered.

Pros

of the single Council model:

Minimal interruption to business as usual.

Direct control of work programme and an already established model.

There are existing relationships and processes in place.

Existing technical knowledge and expertise within the organisation.



Cons

of the single Council model:

Continuing the existing approach will result in higher water bills for water users, and concerns about affordability for the community.

This is because Council will struggle to access enough funding to meet the required level of services, manage growth, and replace aging water services assets.

This option would not meet the legal requirements. Local Water Done Well requires councils in New Zealand to prove financial sustainability for the future. This option is too costly for our council and ratepayers.

Unable to compete within the sector for expertise and contractors.

Check out the Consultation Document

You have until
**Tuesday
22 April**
to have your say!

Get your copy of the consultation document from our website or offices and make sure you have everything you need to make a submission and share your views.

Consultation opens on 14 March

Make a submission on our website
www.tararuadc.govt.nz/consultation

Fill in a hardcopy form from one of our libraries or customer service centres and drop it in a box in person

Fill in a hardcopy form and post it to us:
Local Water Done Well Consultation
FreePost 69367
PO Box 115, Dannevirke 4942
Please note NZ Post delivery timeframes.



Scan the QR code to be taken to our consultations webpage



06 374 4080 OR 06 376 0110



info@tararuadc.govt.nz



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