AUCKLAND WATER STRATEGY

Te Pūrongo-ā-Tau a te Rautaki Wai ki Tāmaki Makaurau

Annual Progress Report 2024/2025

aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Image: Auckland Council/Gino Demeer

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About this report

This report provides a progress update on the implementation of the Auckland Water Strategy, covering financial year 2024/25 (1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025). The long-term direction of the strategy will take at least thirty years to achieve. This report covers the third year of the strategy's implementation.

The report is prepared for Auckland Council's Policy and Planning Committee (a committee of the whole of the Governing Body), which oversees council-wide strategies; Auckland Council staff; and members of the public.

The **Background section** provides an overview of the:

- Auckland Water Strategy
- operating context for the third year of implementation
- engagement with mana whenua.

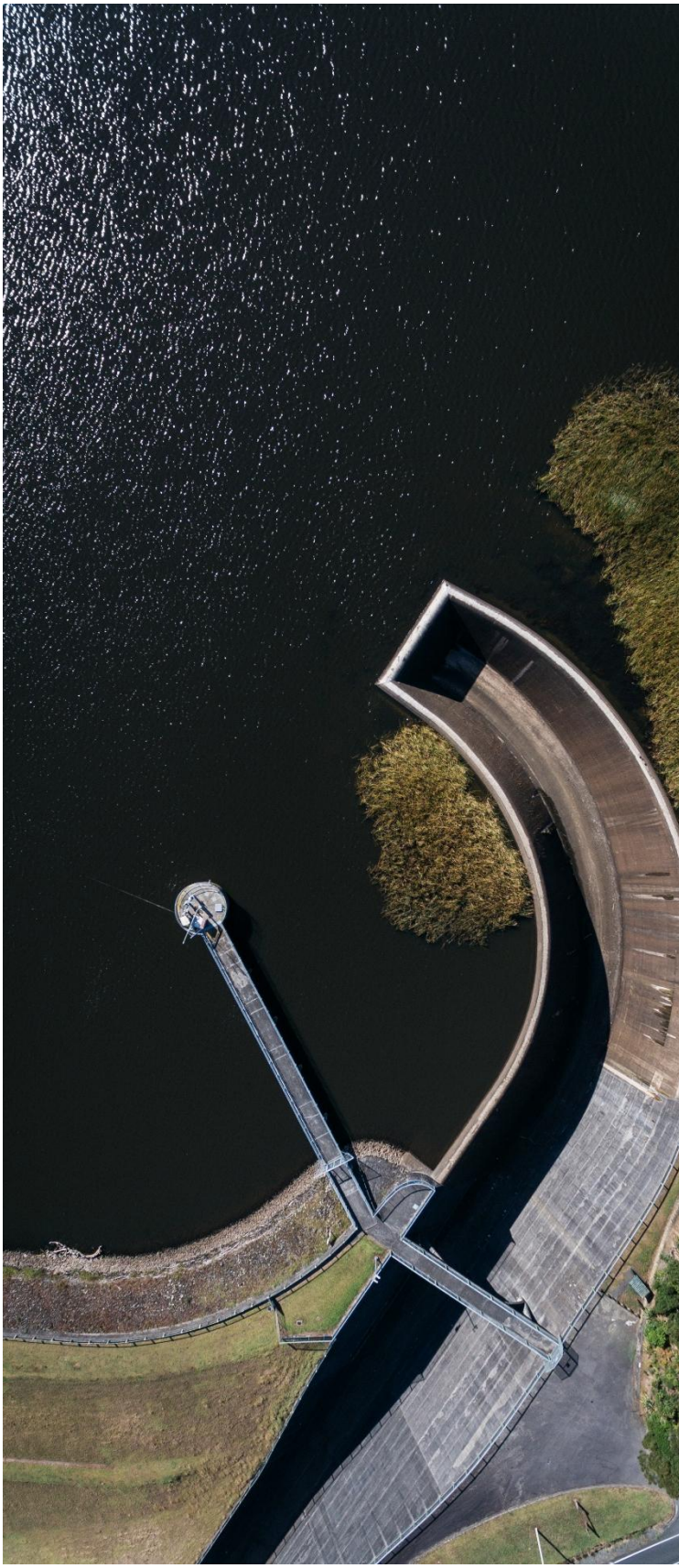
The **Progress Summary section** provides a summary of implementation progress. This includes:

- achievement of water security targets
- progress towards the long-term aims of the strategy
- progress on specific actions set out in the strategy.

Detailed progress updates for each strategic shift and associated actions are presented in Appendix 1: Detailed strategic shift and action progress.

The 2025 review of the strategy's water consumption targets is summarised in Appendix 2: Action 5.10 water target review.

Relevant national reform during the reporting period is summarised in Appendix 3: Government water services and resource management reforms.

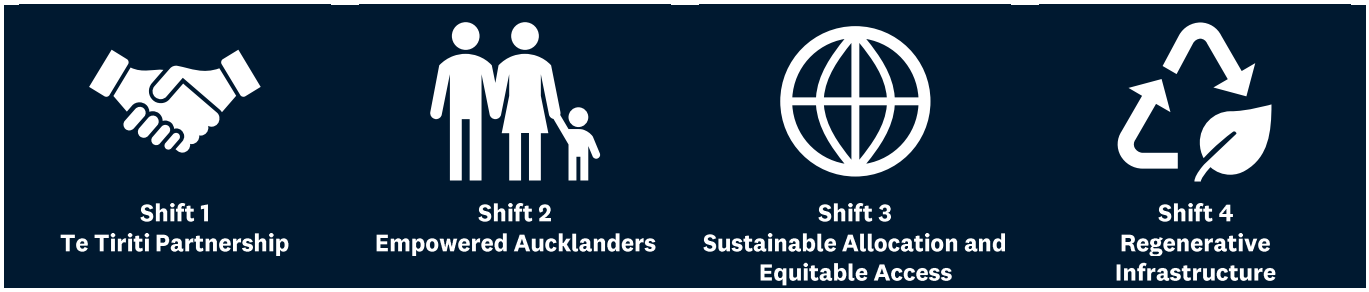


Background

The Auckland Water Strategy (water strategy) is Auckland Council's thirty-year approach to water, guided by the vision: *te mauri*[1] *o te wai—the life-sustaining capacity of Auckland's water—is protected and enhanced*. The water strategy commits the council to a bold new relationship with water. It sets a vision for Auckland's waters and provides strategic direction for investment and action across the council group. The water strategy and its implementation plan were adopted by the Environment and Climate Change Committee in March 2022.[2] The water strategy sits beneath the *Auckland Plan 2050* and alongside *Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan*, as a guide for decision-making across the council group.

The water strategy sets out eight overarching 'strategic shifts' for the council group. Each strategic shift addresses an area of water related activity and outlines a long-term aim for the council to progress towards. A set of shorter-term actions are also included – these are designed to achieve early progress towards the aims of each strategic shift.

Strategic shifts



The council and mana whenua are partners in the protection, management, and enhancement of water.

Aucklanders are empowered to shape decisions about, and are prepared for, our changing water future.

When the council allocates water from the natural environment, water use is sustainable and considers the health and wellbeing of ecosystems and people.

Ensuring Auckland's water infrastructure is regenerative, resilient, low carbon, and increases the mauri of water. It should be seen and understood by Aucklanders.

Auckland captures, uses, and recycles water efficiently so that everyone has access to enough water of the appropriate quality to meet their needs.

Water and its life-sustaining capacity is a central principle in land management and planning decisions.

Auckland has thriving and sustainable natural water ecosystems that support life, food gathering and recreation.

Auckland has the knowledge about water to make good quality, timely and strategic decisions about water.

[1] Life force, the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. It is also the life-sustaining capacity of an entity. See Auckland Water Strategy, p 40, Glossary of Terms.
[2] Auckland Water Strategy webpage with background information and links to key documents.

Context

National, regional, and organisational context has influenced implementation of the water strategy over the last year.

Nationally, significant reform processes in water services and resource management have been underway for several years, which continued over 2024/25 (see Appendix 3). Regionally, the need to respond to and prepare for extreme weather events and a growing population continue to underpin the context within which the council group operates, which influences how the council delivers its responsibilities and functions related to water.

Organisationally, the council group has been focused on improved investment planning and decision making. The new investment framework will improve water implementation by strengthening alignment between high-level strategic direction and operational delivery.

Throughout the year Watercare focused on preparing for financial separation from the council on 1 July 2025 and operating under its new regulatory framework. This has included the creation of the Watercare Charter and a 10-year business plan.

Engagement with mana whenua

The water strategy directs the council group to work towards a future where the mauri (life force) of Auckland's waters is restored and protected. Partnership with mana whenua is central to achieving this vision and it is explicitly directed in strategic shift one - Te Tiriti Partnership.

This direction aligns with the council's organisational commitment to Te Tiriti partnership and Māori outcomes. Over 2024/25, Ngā Mātārae[3] has been working to reset and strengthen the council's relationships with mana whenua entities in a range of ways.

Mana whenua engagement (and in some cases partnership) on specific water related projects, programmes and topics occurs across council departments and council-controlled organisations. This engagement can include regular discussions with individual iwi/hapū representatives and/or collective fora.

Starting in 2024/25, the Policy department dedicated budget to support mana whenua engagement and partnership for the Natural Environment Strategy unit's programmes and projects, including water strategy implementation. As an initial step, the 19 mana whenua entities entered into a services agreement with the Policy department. This agreement was developed specifically for mana whenua entities.

In 2024/25, Policy Department staff met with representatives from eleven mana whenua entities individually (20 meetings) on water strategy implementation. Over the last two years, 18 of the 19 mana whenua entities have been available to discuss the water strategy's implementation. The 19th mana whenua entity has agreed to meet on this topic in July 2025 (just after this reporting period). Hui have included updates on implementation and explored opportunities for collaboration in several key work areas. Wherever possible staff continue to align and co-ordinate engagement.

For additional information on mana whenua engagement and partnership refer to Shift 1: Te Tiriti Partnership on Appendix 1, page 19.

[3] Auckland Council's Māori Outcomes Directorate.

Progress summary (2024/25)

This section provides a summary of implementation progress based on the detailed assessment (see Appendix 1) that considers:

- achievement of specific targets in the water strategy
- progress towards the aims of each of the eight strategic shifts in the water strategy
- delivery of the specific actions outlined in the water strategy and its implementation plan.

Water security targets

These targets aim to increase Auckland's water efficiency when using water from the reticulated network and increase Auckland's supply of (non-dam) recycled water and rainwater over the next 25 years.

Consumption (increasing efficiency)		
Year	**Water Security Target**	**Status (as of June 30, 2025)**
2025	<253 litres consumption per person per day (gross PCC, network)	**257 litres/person/day***
Collection (boosting recycled water supply)		
Year	**Water Security Target**	**Status (as of June 30, 2025)**
2030	20 million litres per day (non-dam) rainwater and recycled water capacity for beneficial use	**22 million litres/day****
*Within the territorial authority district +/- 5 litres (12-month rolling average) **Recycled water capacity for beneficial use in Auckland (not including rainwater tanks)		

Figure 1. Auckland Water Strategy water security targets and status as of 30 June 2025.

The 2050 water consumption target (<225 l/p/d) was reviewed in 2025 as planned[1] and the target was retained. The 2050 target will be reviewed again in 2027. A summary of the review approach and findings is provided in Appendix 2.

The 2025 water consumption target is 253 litres per person per day (l/p/d).

- 2024/25 daily water consumption per person was 257 l/p/d, which is a decrease on last year.
- While the 2025 water consumption target has been exceeded by a small amount, water efficiency overall has improved on last year (and previous years) and 257 l/p/d is within the variation allowed around the calculation of daily water consumption.

The 2030 recycled water collection target is 20 million litres per day.

- This target has been achieved with 22 million litres per day recycled water for beneficial reuse being collected.

A key finding of the review was the need to update the population figures used in Watercare's calculation of daily water consumption per person. This report has updated the estimates of daily per person water consumption using up to date population data, which means that they differ from previous reporting on daily per person water consumption (see Appendix 2).

Progress is being made towards the long-term aims of the water strategy

The water strategy identifies eight long-term aims for the council group to achieve. Some of the changes described in the water strategy will take years to develop and establish within the council's systems and processes, and decades to implement across the region. Yet, progress towards these aims is being made.

1. Te Tiriti Partnership

The council group – including water related functions and activity - continues to focus on achieving Māori outcomes (in alignment with strategic direction set by Tāmaki Ora). Ngā Mātārae leadership to change the way the council works with mana whenua and mataawaka will support staff across departments to develop Te Tiriti-based partnership for the protection, management, and enhancement of water over time. The Policy department continues engagement with mana whenua entities on water strategy implementation.

2. Community Empowerment

This shift aims to increase active citizenship for water management and outcomes across the region over time. This aim is achieved through changing the way the council works with Aucklanders across all of its water management and water related functions.

In 2024/25, the council's restructure and shift in approach to the Long-term Plan re-confirmed the organisation's focus on community engagement and active citizenship. The council's community engagement advice, training and tools are being refreshed and improved with a focus on increasing the capability of staff, consistency of engagement practice across the organisation and visibility of community engagement support services. These improvements will support the achievement of this shift over time.

Watercare has retained its customer focus and has been developing its approach to working with Aucklanders on long-term planning and decision making for water services. This has included proactive and innovative public engagement on the Metropolitan Servicing Strategy over 2024/25. The expectation is that communities and accountability to communities will only become more of a focus under the new regulatory environment.

3. Sustainable allocation and equitable access

This shift is delivered entirely through Resource Management Act planning processes. It aligns with the direction set in the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management*.

The council is progressing work to review and revise existing water allocation flows, levels, and availabilities – and add new levels and availabilities where needed. Over allocation will be avoided and 'clawed back' where it has already occurred. There is also work underway to improve the water allocation data system.

4. Regenerative water infrastructure

The adoption of the *Long-term Plan 2024-2034* and its updated 30-year *Infrastructure Strategy* is a significant milestone. The Infrastructure Strategy embeds Auckland Water Strategy aims - identifying the need for investment that supports regenerative infrastructure solutions over time. The council's Infrastructure Strategy identifies that, overall, infrastructure provision and programming is more aligned to growth related outcomes and less aligned to emissions reduction and environment outcomes, including enhancing te mauri o te wai. The Infrastructure Strategy identifies emissions reductions, resilience, te ao Māori and environmental degradation as key issues requiring attention in future investment decisions. Future investment decisions will provide opportunities to achieve more regenerative outcomes over time.

5. Water security

Auckland is well positioned to manage water security today, with adequate water supply and plans in place for long dry periods (i.e. drought).

Long-term water security is a challenge that requires the council group's immediate attention to ensure that a suite of measures is underway today to ensure a diverse system of water sources that provides the most resilient, reliable water security solutions is available to Aucklanders, as population continues to grow.

Decisions on future water source investment will be needed within a few years because of the long lead in times required to develop major water source infrastructure (e.g. wastewater reuse and/or additional dam storage).

6. Integrated land use and water planning

Auckland Council has maintained a focus on water planning as an aspect of integrated land use planning. In the context of a dynamic government freshwater and resource management reform programme, the water strategy has provided a clear strategic direction and supported a work programme that is engaged with and responsive to the evolving national framework but also builds cross-council alignment on these complex issues using the full suite of tools available. The water strategy has also ensured a continued focus on te mauri o te wai which is important for continuity in our partnership with mana whenua across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Major challenges remain for this shift. While our understanding of freshwater resources and the pressures on these and other natural environment elements has grown steadily, there is still a lot to do to ensure that our planning and investment decisions fully integrate water and land use planning at all scales.

7. Restoring and enhancing water ecosystems

Across the council group, there is work underway on specific ecosystem restoration projects and programmes to take a catchment-based approach; engage with mana whenua; and evaluate and improve investment wherever possible. In 2024/25, the council has:

- reviewed the Natural Environment Targeted Rate to improve investment decisions
- delivered an environment assessment for the Manukau Harbour[4] as part of the catchment-scale *Achieving Better Environmental Outcomes for the Manukau Harbour* initiative
- progressed the *Puhinui Regeneration Programme* and continued to support the *Kaipara Moana Remediation Programme* - two catchment scale programmes focused on the restoring te mauri o te wai from mountains to sea
- identified the need to investigate catchment community groups as a key non-regulatory mechanism for achieving freshwater outcomes.

[4] For more information on the *Achieving Better Environmental Outcomes for the Manukau Harbour* programme, refer to Manukau Harbour environmental assessment via Knowledge Auckland.

8. Pooling knowledge

When the water strategy was developed and adopted in 2021-2022, data, information and knowledge management practices were identified as a significant challenge to making well-informed decisions for water management across the council group. Since then, Auckland Council has prioritised data management and:

- created and recruited a data governance team (2023)
- adopted a data governance policy (2024) and launched its new data management platform Informatica (2025)
- created and filled a Māori data role to progress Māori data policy and training (2024).

Knowledge[5] management practises remain under-developed across the organisation. A knowledge management framework for water has been developed. Implementation of this framework across relevant teams will result in a significant improvement of knowledge management for water across the organisation.

[5] Knowledge refers to the information and insights that people within an organisation hold.

Delivery of actions is mixed, experiencing multiple challenges, and slower than originally anticipated

There are 58 actions identified in the water strategy that are planned to be completed over the first ten years following the water strategy's adoption in 2022. Of the 58 actions in the water strategy (see Figure 2):

- 6 of the actions have been completed
- 12 are progressing within indicative timeframes in the implementation plan
- 21 are progressing, but are subject to challenges and/or overdue indicative timeframes in the implementation plan
- 7 are not progressing and are overdue indicative timeframes in the implementation plan
- 12 are not planned to start until a later date.

To assess progress, each action has been assessed and assigned a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) marker, based on three criteria:

- achievement of the indicative timeline set in the implementation plan
- milestones achieved in the reporting period
- existence of major challenges to implementation.

There are five colours associated with the RAG markers; the meaning of each colour is provided in the key for Figure 2.

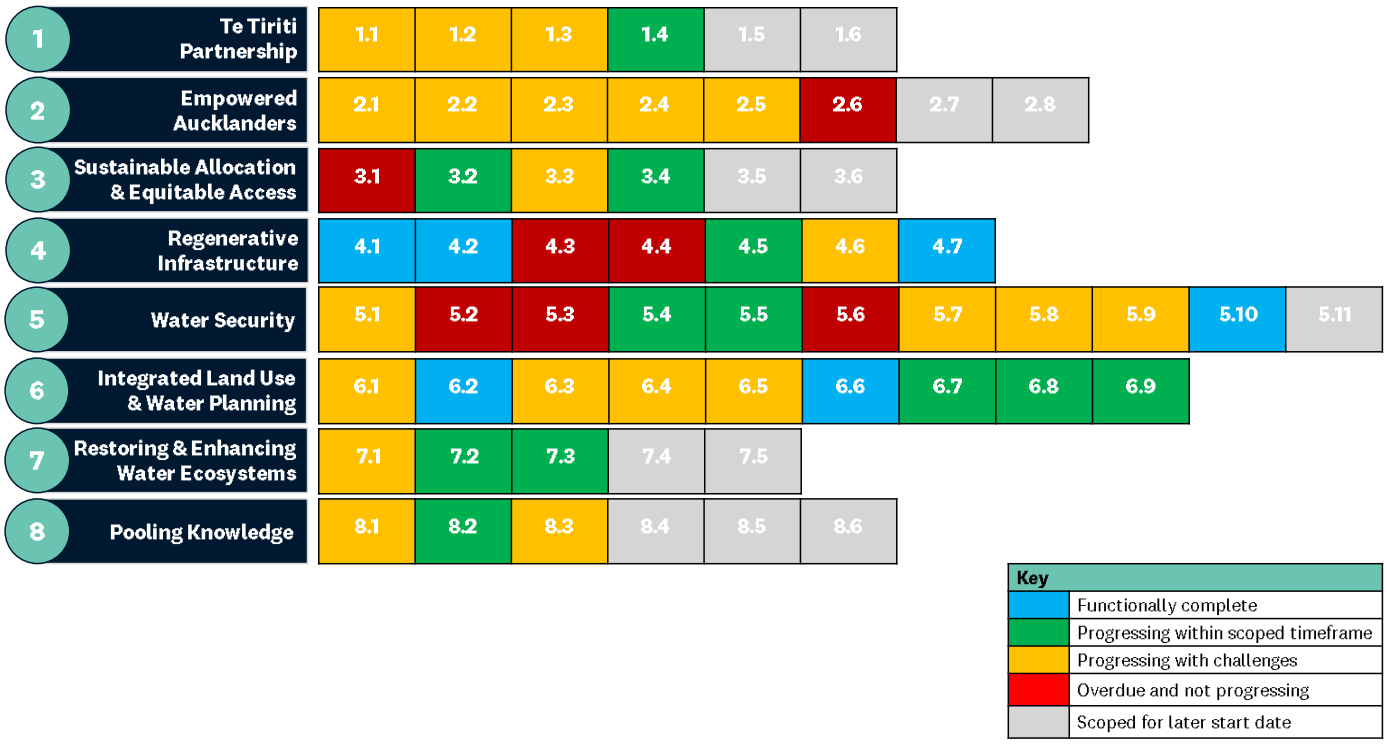


Figure 2. Auckland Water Strategy strategic shifts and progress status of associated actions.

Where implementation of actions is progressing

Freshwater management and knowledge

The council maintains its strong focus on freshwater improvement through a large programme of work to develop and deliver a new freshwater management system across the region. Over 2024/25, this has included:

- Completing a series of 15 issues and options papers to underpin new or revised freshwater plan change provisions and non-regulatory (including action plan) responses.
- A new 'Catchment Context' geographic information system (GIS) platform to support farmers with their freshwater farm plans (due to launch in 2026).
- Submissions on central government water related reforms.
- Reviewing the *Strategic Approach to Sediment Programme*, which continues to deliver tangible sediment reductions across the region.
- Improving our understanding of freshwater ecosystems. Environmental state and trend analysis is improving understanding of faecal contamination sources in fresh water and nutrient and sediment susceptibility of Auckland estuaries.

This summary highlights progress on actions 6.2, 6.6, 6.7, 7.2, 7.3, 8.2 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Building resilience

The council continues to have a strategic focus on resilience building for both infrastructure and communities. Over 2024/25, this has included:

- Work to evaluate and map the resilience of the council's water infrastructure systems.
- Incorporating an understanding of the impacts of climate change on water sources into the council's processes and advice for decision makers.
- Avoiding further development in water-related natural hazard areas.

This summary highlights progress on actions 4.5, 5.4, and 6.8 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Water allocation

The council is progressing a systematic review of its water allocation framework to ensure that:

- the health of waterways (including consideration of mauri) is protected when water is allocated for use.
- where over allocation is occurring, the amount of water allocated will be brought back down under the limit for that water source over time.
- *Auckland Unitary Plan* provisions are strong enough to ensure over allocation is prevented.
- we develop an improved water allocation data management system and publicly available information.

This summary highlights progress on Actions 3.2 and 3.3 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Where implementation of actions is challenged

Partnership with mana whenua

12 actions in the water strategy require mana whenua partnership to progress their delivery and eight of these actions have either not progressed or are progressing slowly. This is indicative of:

- limited resourcing being allocated to these actions by the council.
- limited capacity to engage in so many projects at once and more immediate issues taking priority for iwi.

Steps will be taken to secure additional resourcing, review the number of actions requiring mana whenua partnership, and stagger the timing of these actions.

This summary highlights challenges or delays with the delivery of Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.3, 3.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.6 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Water security

Some water security actions have not progressed over 2024/25. This has included limited or no progress to:

- develop a position and accompanying plan to address affordable water access for Aucklanders who struggle to pay their water costs.
- investigate a level of service for Watercare to proactively manage peak water demand.
- support central government to set targets for water efficient homes.
- develop policy for increasing rainwater collection and regulations to increase water capture for reuse.
- develop a water availability model to inform decisions about water permits in future.

Delay on progressing these actions is due primarily to limited capacity and resourcing for technical expertise, principally across the Policy department. Steps will be considered to secure additional resourcing, review the number of actions requiring Policy department leadership and stagger the timing of these actions to reflect capacity.

This summary highlights challenges or delays with the delivery of Actions 3.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Setting new targets

Two actions that require work to establish new targets for the council to track and work towards have not been progressed. These include establishing targets for:

- the water literacy of Aucklanders
- Aucklanders access to blue-green spaces.

It is recommended that these actions be prioritised for delivery as soon as possible to simplify and enhance the ability of the council to set direction clearly and track progress towards that direction succinctly, transparently, and clearly.

This summary highlights challenges or delays with the delivery of Actions 2.1, 2.5, 2.7, and 2.8 in the Auckland Water Strategy. For more information refer to the updates on each of these actions in Appendix 1.

Risk management

The Auckland Water Strategy programme management team review risks to implementation of the water strategy every 6 months. Opportunities to mitigate key risks are identified and actioned throughout the year.

Over 2024/25, the programme management team identified the following risks to successful implementation of the water strategy:

- low awareness across the organisation of the long-term vision and direction for the future of Auckland's waters that is set in the water strategy
- limited buy-in to deliver specific actions in the water strategy for a variety of reasons
- limited capacity, and more urgent priorities of departments and teams, mean actions are not progressed.

These risks are all occurring to varying degrees. The water strategy programme management team work to mitigate these risks to improve implementation of the water strategy over time. The focus over the last year has been to:

- increase awareness of the water strategy through a suite of communications
- ensure that the direction set in the water strategy is embedded in all key strategies and plans[6]
- focus on identifying responsibilities and accountability for the highest priority actions as identified in a prioritisation exercise completed at the end of 2023/24[7]
- work collaboratively with key departments and council-controlled organisations to promote implementation of the water strategy
- develop a cross-organisational governance structure for the water strategy's implementation that aligns with investment areas
- work with investment area leads to begin investigating investment area activity and its alignment to the water strategy's strategic shifts, aims and actions.

Mitigating these risks through the above activities is expected to remain the team's risk management focus in 2025/26, as well as any additional risks that are identified through the risk review process.

The programme management team also expect to escalate risks and issues more over the next three years – as some risks may be identified as intractable over time.

[6] For example, the Long-term Plan and Infrastructure Strategy; the Southern Rural Strategy; the Watercare Letter of Expectation and Statement of Intent, the Watercare Metro Servicing Strategy.

[7] The Auckland Water Strategy programme management team delivered a prioritisation exercise with staff from across the council group in May 2023/24. This exercise was a risk management activity to support staff, particularly in the Policy department, to identify the highest priority actions to focus on given capacity constraints were identified early on and not all actions on the strategy would be able to be progressed simultaneously.

Implementation year four (2025/26)

This section outlines implementation over 2025/26 for the three main ways the water strategy is implemented:

Embedding the long-term direction of the strategy

Auckland Council departments and council-controlled organisations will continue to align their strategies, policies and plans to the direction set in the Auckland Water Strategy.

The Policy department will provide guidance to staff across the council group to support this process, with a focus on the *Long-term Plan,* the *Metro Servicing Strategy*, the *Drought Management Plan 2025*, and council-controlled organisations' letters of expectation and Statements of Intent.

The expectation is that this will be supported by, standardised, and increased through the *Group Strategic Framework*, once implemented.

Delivery of specific actions in the water strategy

At least 16 departments and council-controlled organisations will be implementing specific actions in the water strategy in 2025/26. Approximately 30 actions will be progressed in 2025/26 and at least four actions will be completed by the end of 2025/26. A review and update to the organisation's implementation approach will determine what actions are delivered over the next three years. This is because the internal three-year (2022/23-2024/25) work programme created to identify and agree responsibilities for action delivery across the council group ran up until 30 June 2025. This plan needs to be updated, and as part of that update the approach taken is being assessed. It is likely that for the next three-years the approach will be to identify responsibilities, timeframes, and resourcing for actions through investment areas and department delivery plans. An updated overview of the work programme will be compiled once the process with investment areas and departments is completed.

Implementation programme management

In 2025/26, programme management activities will include:

- Reviewing the actions in the water strategy with a focus on revising delivery timeframes, clarifying action language, consolidating actions where possible and agreeing the removal of actions where they are no longer relevant, or are completed.
- Developing a refreshed implementation plan for 2025/26-2027/28 with a focus on:
    - increasing visibility of responsibility and accountability for action delivery through organisational investment areas and department delivery plans.
    - agreeing priorities[8] and identifying capacity constraints and revising action delivery timeframes (i.e. staggering delivery) wherever appropriate.
    - prioritising completion of actions that are nearly complete and delaying initiating actions that have not yet started until more of the actions underway are completed.
    - prioritising addressing responsibility and accountability for delivery and reporting of actions being led by:
        - Planning and Resource Consents department
        - Watercare Services Limited
        - Policy department
        - Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department.
- Confirm a refreshed governance structure for implementation of the water strategy and increase communications and the escalation of issues with General Managers, in particular.
- Continue internal communications about the water strategy and its implementation.
- Ongoing engagement with the 19 mana whenua entities of Tāmaki Makaurau.
- Working with key councillors to support implementation of the water strategy through relevant committees and through liaison with council-controlled organisations. Councillors have an important role in supporting organisational implementation of the Auckland Water Strategy.
- Continue the existing risk management process.

[8] Prioritising actions will consider the results of the prioritisation exercise completed in 2023/24. The top priority actions were report in the 2023/24 Annual Report of Auckland Water Strategy implementation.

Appendix 1: Detailed strategic shift and action status

This appendix provides an update on the implementation progress of the eight strategic shifts and the 58 actions outlined in the Auckland Water Strategy. The reporting period covered is the 2024/25 financial year and all progress updates relate to the end of that year (30 June 2025).

The information in this appendix was provided by departments from across the council group.

Descriptions of each action and indicative timeframes for delivery can be referenced on page 57 of the Auckland Water Strategy Implementation Plan.

Appendix Guide

The approach to assign a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) status for each action has been updated from previous reports. Each action has been assessed based on three criteria:

1. achievement of the indicative timeline set in the strategy
2. significant milestones achieved in the reporting period
3. major challenges to implementation.

Each action receives a score that corresponds with one of the five RAG status markers (Figure 3).

Marker	Meaning
	Complete
	Progressing within scoped timeframe
	Overdue and/or progressing with challenges
	Overdue and not progressing
	Scoped for a later start date

Figure 3. The RAG progress status markers

Image: Auckland Council/Bryan Lowe

Shift 1: Te Tiriti partnership

Aim

Auckland Council and mana whenua are partners in the protection, management, and enhancement of water.

Overall implementation update

Building strong, enduring, and responsive Te Tiriti partnerships is a long-term priority for the council. Overall, the council group is still in the early stages of establishing the foundations to achieve these goals and respond to the most recent issues of significance identified by mana whenua and mataawaka.[9] Addressing all the challenges to achieving meaningful partnership for water outcomes will take time. However, the last year has seen a renewed focus to improve how parts of the council group partner with mana whenua entities.

Recent central government decisions[10] have questioned the role and recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in law. This has continued to put a strain on relationships. Despite this challenging context for Te Tiriti partnership, the council group continues to prioritise and actively seek to fulfil its Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and responsibilities. Ngā Matarae[11] have been providing strong leadership to drive change across the organisation, including:

- reviewing Auckland Council Māori engagement practices (in 2023/24) and resetting relationships with iwi and mataawaka by meeting in person
- prioritising Mana ki te Mana engagement between iwi and mataawaka and senior council staff
- reviewing Auckland Council Group fora with mana whenua, and prioritising individual engagement over collective fora
- reviewing and refreshing Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau (now Tāmaki Ora[12]) and the Māori Outcomes Fund (endorsed June 2025, adopted July 2025 onwards)
- managing a systematic process to identify and ensure the council's response to He Whenua Makaurau Schedule of Issues of Significance 2025-2030
- supporting the development of Achieving Māori Outcomes plans by all departments and council-controlled organisations (an ongoing process that will continue throughout 2025/26)
- working with data governance on the creation of Māori data management policy and practices.

This work has been done with a view to being responsive to Māori priorities, including He Waka Kōtuia Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audit 2024[13] and He Whenua Makaurau Schedule of Issues of Significance 2025-2030 from Houkura Independent Māori Statutory Board.

The water strategy programme management team continue to focus on individual engagement with 19 mana whenua entities on Auckland Water Strategy implementation and specific projects (e.g. Action 1.1) to deliver a dual benchmarking approach for assessing water outcomes). Overall, progress on specific actions

[9] Houkura Independent Māori Statutory Board (2025). He Whenua Makaurau: Schedule of Issues of Significance 2025-2030.
[10] The previous years' central government context is summarised in Auckland Water Strategy Annual Progress Report 2023/2024.
[11] The council's Māori Outcomes Directorate.
[12] The council group's Māori Outcomes Strategy and performance measurement framework.
[13] Houkura Independent Māori Statutory Board (2024). He Waka Kōtuia: Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audit 2024. Prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

in the water strategy involving mana whenua partnership are progressing slowly, pending resourcing or prioritisation. This is due to capacity constraints of both iwi/hapū and Auckland Council staff.

The water strategy's programme management team continue to work with teams across the council to address implementation challenges in the next reporting period. However, there are too many actions reliant on iwi/hapū partnership across the region to progress all of them at once. The team continue to prioritise Action 1.1 as a key initial step. Progress on this action has been delayed (as reported in previous Annual Reports). An updated approach to delivering Action 1.1 has been adopted over the 2024/25 year (see Action 1.1 progress update directly below). Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategic shift 1 actions and their progress in years one and two: progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
1.1 Apply dual framework to benchmark water outcomes (ongoing)	This action is progressing. Increased resourcing for staff and mana whenua has been agreed for the mana whenua-led component of this action. Policy department services agreements established with the 19 mana whenua entities of Tāmaki Makaurau to enable delivery of this action. An updated approach for delivery has been identified, which is to work with individual iwi/hapū on rohe scale assessment and reporting on *te mauri o te wai*. Support for iwi/hapū to complete these assessments has been secured and a goal of completing three iwi/hapū reports over financial year 2025/26 has been set. Planned 5-yearly 'Water Sensitives Cities' benchmarking is being scoped for delivery in financial year 2026/27.	Mana whenua capacity is expected to be an ongoing challenge. Mitigation has included contracting support for iwi/hapū and working with each iwi/hapū to determine suitable timing for them to progress a collaboration on this. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be adjusted.
1.2 Resource mana whenua to enable meaningful partnership relationships with the council (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. Tāmaki Ora[14], endorsed June 2025, includes the Iwi Ora outcome 'Iwi have the resources, relationships, and ability to influence decision-making and shape the future of Tāmaki Makaurau'. The associated activities by council to achieve this are: • at least three priorities for each entity are advanced. • all mana whenua entities are contributing to regional and local board strategic decisions. Activity by departments and council-controlled organisations[15] to deliver on Tāmaki Ora outcomes are expected to deliver on these actions over the next 2+ years. Capacity grants taken up by 14 mana whenua entities (these are a maximum of $200,000 annually). Individual plans, programmes, and projects across the council group continue to prioritise Te Tiriti partnership. Several water focussed examples that progressed over the last year include: • Stormwater monitoring kaitiaki employment programme. • Hoteo Sediment reduction, Mahurangi Harbour, and blue-green network projects. • Te Whakaoranga o te Puhinui. • Natural Hazards Plan Change. • Achieving better environmental outcomes for the Manukau Harbour. • Te taiao plan and climate adaptation plan funding (Climate Action and Māori Outcomes funding). • Resourcing for mana whenua content on the Freshwater Farm Plan Catchment Context platform being developed by Auckland Council, $130,000 in total over two years.	This action is delivered across the council group. However, reporting on this action is limited. A more comprehensive reporting and evaluation approach is needed to facilitate reporting on the cross-organisational activity for this action. Reporting completed for Tāmaki Ora (formerly Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau) and Achieving Māori Outcomes Plans is expected to provide the specific cross-organisational goals and reporting to enable evaluation of progress on this action in future years.

[14] Auckland Council's Māori Outcomes strategy and performance framework. Previously called 'Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau'.
[15] With responsibilities for water outcomes.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
1.3 Report on te mauri o te wai (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. No iwi focused information sharing or reporting has been established to date. However, state of environment data is being shared by the council with individual iwi at their request to assist them with their specific needs. Monitoring has been expanded to address all current requirements under the NPS-FM 2020.[16] Reporting on the state of fresh water is required under the NPS-FM 2020 and is available via an NPS-FM dashboard. Five-yearly water quality and quantity state and trend reports have been completed in 2024/25. Some departments and council-controlled organisations are improving information sharing: • The Water Quality and River Ecology Data Explorer[17] provides an interactive summary of water quality and freshwater ecology data for rivers, lakes, groundwater, and the coast. • The Environmental Data portal was refreshed to provide easier navigation. Portal and dashboard updates have been shared with the interim Mana Whenua Engagement Forum and individual iwi.	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation and is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action, and its timeframe will be revised.
1.4 Resource mana whenua to lead environmental monitoring (ongoing)	This action is progressing. A programme to support iwi/hapū environmental monitoring was scoped. A new role was created and filled that will focus on this programme. A proposal for seed funding for five years was submitted in July 2025. Next steps include establishment of the programme, which will support administration of funding (if successful), and information for iwi/hapū.	This action may not be implemented long-term if departments do not make commitments to resource mana whenua-led environmental monitoring.
1.5 Create further partnership mechanisms with mana whenua	This action is not a part of year three implementation.	None.
1.6 Enable and support co-governance arrangements where appropriate	This action is not a part of year three implementation.	None.

[16] National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020.
[17] The Water Quality and River Ecology Data Explorer

Shift 2: Empowered Aucklanders

Aim

Aucklanders are empowered to shape decisions about, and are prepared for, our changing water future.

Overall implementation update

This shift[18] aims to increase active citizenship for water management and outcomes across the region over time. This includes consideration of Aucklanders' understanding of water issues, challenges and resilience when affected by water related hazard events (e.g. storm and flooding damage and disruption). It includes understanding and ensuring that Aucklanders have equitable access to natural blue and green spaces across the region and that they can influence decisions made by the council that reflect the value they place on water resources.

This aim is achieved through changing the way the council works with Aucklanders across all of its water management and water related functions. It includes how we work with Aucklanders on long-term regional decisions and specific water infrastructure projects, through to our water education and sustainability programmes and water quality improvement projects. It includes setting and tracking progress towards four new targets for: water literacy, empowered communities, access to blue-green spaces, and community resilience.

Overall, tangible progress is being made at improving community engagement in two ways.

- Achieving engagement with a more representative set of Aucklanders when we engage. For example, Aucklanders submitting on the Annual Plan and Long-term Plan have shifted from lower representation to much higher representation of the diverse mix of Aucklanders, in recent years.[19]
- Increasing and improving staff capability for good practice community engagement across the council group (outlined below).

In 2024/25, the council's restructure and shift in approach to the Long-term Plan re-confirmed the organisation's focus on community engagement and active citizenship. Citizen engagement is a core focus of the organisation through the activity to 'engage with Aucklanders to have their say, participate in decision-making and stay informed.' (Activity 23, 'Well-managed local government' investment area).

Community engagement advice, training and tools are being refreshed and improved with a focus on increasing the capability of staff, consistency of engagement practice across the organisation and visibility of community engagement support services. Over the next two years, initiatives will include a new engagement calendar; new engagement champions across the organisation; a new staff training programme and new elected member workshops on engagement; and a greater focus on working with local boards, among others. The overarching goal is to reach a much larger number of and broader, representative, range of Aucklanders.

The adoption of the Local Boards Funding Policy 2025, including the implementation of a fairer funding model[20], gives local boards more flexibility in local activity decision-making. Local boards' ongoing

[18] The Auckland Water Strategy strategic shift two aim and actions are detailed in the Auckland Water Strategy Implementation Plan, pages 14-19.
[19] Community support for Auckland's Annual Plan - OurAuckland.
[20] Local Boards Funding Policy 2025.

commitment to supporting area-specific activities that drive community empowerment, resilience, and improved environmental sustainability outcomes is demonstrated through programmes like:

- Love Your Streams (EcoMatters) - Henderson-Massey Local Board
- Te Korowai o Papatūānuku - Franklin Local Board, and
- Waipapa Stream Restoration – Waitematā Local Board.

Watercare Services Limited have been focused on preparing for financial separation on 1 July 2025 from the council and operating under its new regulatory framework. This has included the creation of the Watercare Charter[21] (commencing on 1 April 2025) and a 10-year business plan. However, Watercare retains its customer focus and has been developing its approach to working with Aucklanders on long-term planning and decision making for water services. This has included proactive and innovative public engagement on the Metropolitan Servicing Strategy over 2024/25. The expectation is that communities and accountability to communities will only become more of a focus under the new regulatory environment.

Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 2.

[21] Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) (Watercare Charter) Order 2025

Table 2. Strategic shift 2 actions and their progress in years one and two; progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
2.1. Develop and deliver a framework for, and measure, water literacy at regular intervals (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. Watercare continued their work to survey Aucklanders' water literacy and use that information to inform their communications and education.	Delivery of this action by Policy department paused while other actions in the water strategy were prioritised for delivery in 2024/25. A lead will be identified, the timeline for delivery updated, it will be incorporated into the Policy department delivery plan, and technical specialist services will be sought to support delivery.
2.2. Grow council group's water literacy education programmes (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. The council group has increased and improved its water focused education programmes over the last three years for three key areas of water literacy: climate change, water-related natural hazards (i.e. flooding), and water efficiency. Watercare's water literacy research (see Action 2.1) is ongoing and is applied through education and communications, including: • the 'Easy Does It' campaign to drive water use efficiency • a campaign to educate about fats and oils in pipes • continued school water education programme with 567 classes reaching 15,876 students across 58 schools • introduced guided student tours of dams, with 300 participants • increasing the number of languages that communications are delivered in. Environmental Services deliver climate risks education through a resilient marae programme; a schools education programme 'Spongy Schools, Spongy Cities'; and a rural pilot on soil health and reducing flooding/landslides. Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department has produced flood preparedness communications and tools, including: • 'Creating a flood resilient home' (seven languages) and 'Preparing your property for flooding' guides • 'Flood modelling explained' and 'Getting the most out of Flood Viewer' videos • upgrades to the Flood Viewer (online Flood Hazard Map) and ongoing media campaigns to promote it. Auckland Emergency Management continued its community and household preparedness programme to support groups and individuals to learn more about preparing for environmental and climatic hazards, including flooding. Other emergency readiness initiatives include: • 20 local board Emergency Readiness and Response Plans • Auckland's first Community Civil Defence and Emergency Management Forum of 180+ stakeholders • sessions and engagement with senior groups, Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel, and the Disability Advisory Panel. Public consultation incorporates education (e.g. Regional Pest Management Plan, as it related to biosecurity risks in waterways, Watercare Metropolitan Servicing Strategy).	This intent of this action is to increase water literacy education in a targeted way based on the results of research on the water literacy of Aucklanders (Action 2.1). Watercare is progressing this for their education programmes and the council is delivering many education programmes. However, targeted improvements to our programmes based on broad water literacy research has not progressed. This action does not have a lead and is overdue for the indicative delivery timeframe. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be reviewed to begin following the completion of Action 2.1.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
2.3. Resource mana whenua to lead community engagement for water projects in catchments in their rohe (ongoing)	This action is progressing. This action was delivered across the council group, for example: • $1.17m was distributed between all 19 iwi to support priority resilience-building activities within their respective rohe (Resilient Tāmaki Makaurau) • Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience and the Recovery Office support several iwi-led initiatives, including storm-affected wai monitoring, riparian planting and stream education, community education on stream and flood resilience, and engagement on water adaptation and catchment planning • Auckland Emergency Management work alongside multiple marae to support them in their role in emergency events.	Reporting on the level of resourcing available for mana whenua to lead community engagement for water projects in their rohe has not been received for this report, with one exception. This action does not have a lead and is overdue the indicative timeframe for delivery. This action will be reviewed.
2.4. Align, coordinate, resource and evaluate the council group's community engagement on water	This action is progressing with challenges. Community engagement remained a priority for all the relevant departments, teams and council-controlled organisations with water-related responsibilities. Many community engagement processes were delivered. For example, community consultation on Watercare's Metropolitan Servicing Strategy and community consultation on Shoreline Adaptation Plans. Citizen Engagement continued to improve and develop the guidance, tools and support available to staff for community engagement. This work includes a focus on supporting alignment and coordination; and resourcing training to increase good practise engagement. For example, 37 staff attended training to enhance public deliberation and participatory processes. Some co-ordination and alignment activities have been reported. For example, 'Resilience Clusters' for staff working across resilience enhancing projects and engagement. The objective is to reduce duplication and unite resources for place-based planning, funding and engagement activities. There is one working group per local board, supporting over 26 storm-affected communities.	This action has not been prioritised in Policy department activities due to other actions in the water strategy being prioritised for delivery in 2023/24 and 2024/25. Progress on this action may remain slow until it is prioritised for delivery, perhaps in conjunction with the Governance department. This action combines multiple activities, processes and projects. Challenges and next steps for each are addressed here separately. Aligning and co-ordinating water-related community engagement on water across the council group remains a challenge. Citizen Engagement will be updating the council's engagement calendar (pending funding decisions); and establishing champions of best practise community engagement. Reporting on resourcing and evaluation of community engagement has not been received for this report. Further investigation is required to identify why and what next steps are required. None of the activity in this action has been assigned a lead or leads, and this action is overdue for the indicative delivery timeframe. A lead or leads will be requested for this action and the timeframe for delivery will be updated.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
2.5. Develop a measure of Aucklanders' access to blue-green spaces; a programme to increase access over time; and track progress (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. There is a lot of work underway across the council that relates to open space and the identification and performance of the blue-green network. For example, the Manaaki Tāmaki Makaurau Open Space Sports and Recreation Policy (2025) supports access to the regional blue-green network by: • taking a region-wide approach to open space values and planning • identifying access to nature as a benefit of the open space network and representing this in the policy's performance framework • ensuring open space acquisition and facility planning supports access to nature for all communities.	Developing an overall measure of Aucklanders' access to blue-green spaces remains a challenge. This action will have a lead identified, the timeframe for delivery updated, and it will be incorporated in the Policy department delivery plan. It is anticipated that this action will be part of a wider Open Space Sport and Recreation performance framework, led by the Policy department.
2.6. Investigate community-based ownership models for water infrastructure and services	This action has not progressed.	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation and is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action, and its timeframe will be revised.
2.7 Set targets for and implement empowered communities' approach for water projects across the council group (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation.	None.
2.8 Review the council group's resilience-building programmes for effectiveness, and define and measure community resilience over time	This action was planned to start in 2025/26. However, the activity that delivers this action has been underway since 2022/23 because the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods accelerated the need for the council group to focus on community resilience. Resilience building initiatives remained a focus across the council group including: • community-based climate adaptation (Resilient Tāmaki Makaurau) • local Recovery planning and action across 26 storm-affected areas (Recovery Office) • community and marae resilience (Environmental Services) • flood awareness and preparedness tools and communications (Healthy Waters & Flood Resilience) • emergency readiness, for example 20 local board emergency readiness and response plans delivered (Auckland Emergency Management).	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action.

Shift 3: Sustainable allocation and equitable access

Aim

When the council allocates water from the natural environment, water use is sustainable and considers the health and wellbeing of ecosystems and people.

Overall implementation update

The sustainable allocation and equitable access shift is aimed at ensuring that the council delivers its responsibilities for sustainable allocation of water that provides for the social, economic and cultural well-being of Aucklanders both now and in the future, while maintaining the life supporting capacity of our water sources. This shift emphasises the importance of the following when allocating rights to take water (water permits) from streams, rivers, and aquifers:

- ensuring the health and well-being of water bodies
- including consideration of climate change impacts on water sources
- including consideration of equity.

This shift is aligned with the national direction set in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), which requires Auckland Council to ensure that 'freshwater is allocated and used efficiently, all existing over-allocation is phased out, and future over-allocation is avoided'.[22] To implement this policy Auckland Council must set environmental flows and limits for water bodies and identify take limits in its regional plan.[23]

The aim of this shift is to extend the council's work to deliver on the requirements of the NPS-FM and improve Auckland's water allocation framework, to embed mauri, equity, and climate change within water allocation provisions and processes; and use a more advanced system of modelling and monitoring of water flows and takes than is currently used.

The Planning and Resource Consents department leads implementation of the NPS-FM. Staff in the department are delivering a comprehensive programme of work in preparation for notifying a freshwater plan change to the Auckland Unitary Plan to implement the NPS-FM. As part of this work, they have considered this strategic shift and undertake work to deliver specific actions related to this strategic shift (as reported below). This work falls under the water quantity work stream for the freshwater plan change.

In 2024/25, a water quantity management issues and options paper was completed. The key findings of this paper were:

- demand for water for both urban and rural uses has been growing since the Auckland Unitary Plan became operative in 2016, and is expected to continue growing as population increases
- some of Auckland's freshwater bodies are overallocated, and more are overallocated now than in 2013
- surface and ground water sources are expected to be under stress due to overallocation
- the water quantity provisions set out in the Auckland Unitary Plan are aligned to the National Policy Statement Freshwater Management requirements and no major changes are anticipated in the

[22] National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management 2020 (amended October 2024). Policy 11, p 10.
[23] National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management 2020 (amended October 2024). 3.16 Setting environmental flows and limits and 3.17 Identifying take limits, p 21.

freshwater plan change. However, some amendments and developments of existing provisions are recommended (see below).

- whether the actual water use of consent holders exceeds the water available is unknown and it is possible that, while some water bodies are overallocated, the current use is within the determined water availability
- over allocation is an issue that must be resolved in the Auckland Unitary Plan and in regulatory practice if freshwater objectives that will be set out in the Auckland Unitary Plan are to be achieved. How water is clawed back, while ensuring that users have the water needed to continue to provide for their activity, is a matter that will need to be resolved.

The NPS-FM water quantity direction is not dissimilar to the AUP water quantity management framework. The AUP sets out to safeguard Auckland's streams and rivers by setting minimum flows and levels to achieve outcomes, quantify water available for allocation and to allocate water to users within limits. However, the National Objectives Framework is more explicit about how flows, levels and limits are to be set, and that water is to be allocated within the limits. It also requires closer integration with management of water quality and ecosystems health outcomes for lakes and rivers.

The paper recommends that the council:

- review and revise existing AUP flows, levels, and availabilities, add flows, levels, and availabilities where council holds evidence for streams, rivers and aquifers and set levels for wetland and lake management area overlays. Set method(s) to determine those values for unspecified water bodies.
- amend AUP objectives and policies to direct the avoidance of over allocation.
- develop a policy to direct how over allocation of water will be clawed back.
- develop water take permit transfer criteria.

The primary objective is to ensure that environmental limits are met and to phase out existing over-allocation over time. Water users in fully and over allocated water bodies can expect a reduction in water allocation volumes, including water restrictions when environmental limits are being approached or breached.

The timing for delivery of the council's freshwater plan change has extended in response to national direction. Initially the plan change was required to be notified by the end of 2024. This timeframe has since increased to require notification by 2027. More recently, changes to national direction are likely to mean that notification is extended further and/or the approach to the plan change overall may change in response to reform of the Resource Management system.

Overall, shift three actions (see table below) have progressed well in 2024/25. This represents a step change in implementation of these actions that reported limited progress in years one and two. However, work with mana whenua has been paused over 2024/25 and as such Action 3.1 to work on allocation limits that incorporate te mauri o te wai has not been progressed. This work is expected to be progressed in 2025/26; however, there is a risk that national direction will redirect the council's delivery plan for the freshwater plan change. Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Strategic shift 3 actions and their progress in years one and two; progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
3.1. Develop indicators based on mauri to define allocation limits, in partnership with mana whenua	This action has not progressed over 2024/25.	Mana whenua engagement on the freshwater plan change (including on allocation limits) has not occurred over the reporting period. Mana whenua engagement is planned to resume in 2025/26; however, this is subject to changes in national direction to regional councils on deferring further plan change work until after December 2027. This action is overdue the indicative timeframe for delivery. The timeframe for delivery will be updated to consider an efficient approach, and deferred plan change work.
3.2. Assess Auckland's water resources and availability across the region using a Tāmaki expression of the Te Mana o Te Wai hierarchy (ongoing)	This action is progressing. This action is implemented through a freshwater plan change (to the Auckland Unitary Plan) to implement the National Policy Statement Freshwater Management 2020 (as central government will revise by 2026). In 2024/25: • Water quantity management issues and options paper completed. • Groundwater aquifer availabilities (listed in the Unitary Plan) reviewed and aquifers requiring further work identified. • Initiated development of a Geospatial Information Systems surface water accounting tool that will be publicly available. • A council group definition of equity was developed. A tool to support staff to consider equity in their work was initiated.	None.
3.3. Develop a dynamic water availability model and use it to plan for the future (ongoing model development)	This action is progressing with challenges. In 2024/25: • Action 3.2 work to review groundwater availabilities and surface water accounting completed the first steps towards improved planning for water availability. • Completed the issues and options report on requiring increased use of telemetry on consented water takes. Improvements to the council's data collection and storage systems for consent holders' water use records are being considered in Information Communications Technology and Investment Area prioritisation processes.	This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated.

Te Pūrongo-ā-Tau a te Rautaki Wai ki Tāmaki Makaurau

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
3.4. Set take limits and review allocation rules for the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management using the Tāmaki expression of the Te Mana o Te Wai hierarchy	This action is progressing. In 2024/25, work has been initiated to: • revise Auckland Unitary Plan water availability guidelines • set new 'take limits' based on establishing baseline water quantity that considers protecting and enhancing mauri • Confirm allocation status of aquifers and surface water resources.	None.
3.5 Understand the mauri of existing water sources where water is extracted for use, in partnership with mana whenua	Not a part of year three implementation.	None.
3.6 Create a smart allocation system through increased monitoring and data analysis	Not a part of year three implementation.	None.

Shift 4: Regenerative water infrastructure

Aim

Regenerative infrastructure systems enhance the life-sustaining capacity of water (mauri).

Overall implementation update

The aim of this strategic shift is to transform Auckland Council group's approach to water infrastructure so that it is resilient, low-carbon and enhances the life-sustaining capacity of water. Achieving this shift in the council group's approach will take decades. The first three years of implementation of the water strategy (2022/23 – 2024/25) cover some initial steps to progress towards this change.

The adoption of the Long-term Plan 2024-2034 and its updated 30-year Infrastructure Strategy was a significant milestone. The Infrastructure Strategy embeds Auckland Water Strategy aims - identifying the need for investment that supports regenerative infrastructure solutions overtime. The council's Infrastructure Strategy identifies that, overall, infrastructure provision and programming is more aligned to growth related outcomes and less aligned to emissions reduction and environment outcomes, including enhancing te mauri o te wai. The Infrastructure Strategy identifies emissions reductions, resilience, te ao Māori and environmental degradation as key issues requiring attention in future investment decisions. Future investment decisions will provide opportunities to achieve more regenerative outcomes over the 30-year programme.

Over 2024/25:

- Watercare and Auckland Council staff have worked together to ensure Watercare's Servicing Strategies are aligned with the Auckland Water Strategy direction for infrastructure
- the council's 'three-waters investment area' was established and embeds this shift in the investment area outcomes as '*resilience of infrastructure is improved with water infrastructure that is regenerative, resilient, low carbon and increases the mauri of water*'
- the Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department is delivering a programme of work focused on implementing blue-green infrastructure in areas most affected by the 2023 flooding events. This work targets sites where land has become available and where blue-green projects can be used to manage stormwater and reduce flood risk. These projects apply a mana whenua partnership model that is expected to ensure consideration of mauri is central to these stormwater infrastructure projects.[24]

Seven actions associated within this shift have been progressing, of which two have been completed. However, two actions have not progressed and are unlikely to progress without action being taken. In 2025/26, these actions will be incorporated into department delivery plans or amended to reflect constraints on delivery. Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 4.

[24] Blue-green network projects

Table 4. Strategic shift 4 actions and their progress in years one and two; progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
4.1 Collate case studies to increase understanding of resilient, conspicuous, and mauri-enhancing water infrastructure solutions	This action is complete.	None.
4.2. Review emissions reductions for water infrastructure against those required by Te-Tāruke-a-Tāwhiri and develop an emissions plan if required	This action is complete for this reporting period. Watercare is updating its emissions reduction and decarbonisation plan for water infrastructure. It is ensuring the organisation maintains system efficiency and resilience, while anticipating future emissions impacts from: biosolids management, renewable energy, pumping and water reuse, etc. Watercare has developed a strategic framework for monitoring operational wastewater emissions. Monitoring has been completed at the Māngere, Rosedale, and Pukekohe wastewater treatment facilities. The Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department has implemented a five-step process to manage and reduce scope 3 emissions across its infrastructure projects. Suppliers have been trained on how to use emissions reporting tools and project-level reduction actions are being tracked (use of low-carbon materials, efficient machinery, waste diversion).	None.
4.3. Resource mana whenua to develop guidance and assessment methods for mauri-enhancing infrastructure	This action has not progressed.	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation and is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action, and its timeframe will be revised.
4.4 Assess and map impacts of existing water infrastructure on te mauri o te wai, in partnership with mana whenua	This action has not progressed.	This action follows Action 4.3. This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation and is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action, and its timeframe will be revised.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
4.5. Evaluate and map resilience of the council's water infrastructure systems	This action is progressing. Infrastructure Resilience Stage 1 was completed, and the project progressed to Stage 2. The focus of Stage 2 is a tool to evaluate resilience investments, including water investments. Guidance, such as the Stormwater Code of Practice[25], informs the development of new infrastructure across the region (Engineering Assets and Technical Advisory). See Action 6.9 for related information on water sensitive design.	This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery will be revised.
4.6. Partner with mana whenua to pilot water infrastructure projects that enhance te mauri o te wai (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. Partnership with mana whenua on infrastructure projects is occurring across the organisation on some projects. For example, flood risk reduction, stormwater discharges, and water supply and wastewater projects.	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation and it is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action, and its timeframe will be revised.
4.7. Include mauri in the council's investment prioritisation process for the Annual Budget and Long-term Plan in partnership with mana whenua (ongoing)	This action is complete for this reporting period. The Annual Plan 2025/26[26] was adopted in June 2025 and includes mauri as an investment assessment criterion. The finalised Infrastructure Strategy, and Strategic Investment framework for infrastructure 2024, both advocate for additional investment in understanding and implementing regenerative and mauri-enhancing infrastructure.	Policy department staff will continue to advocate for mauri to be reflected in future iterations of the Annual Plan, the Long-term Plan, and other organisational strategies and plans, where relevant.

[25] Auckland Design Manual: The Auckland Code of Practice for Land Development and Subdivision Chapter 4: Stormwater.
[26] Auckland Council: Annual Plan 2025/26.

Shift 5: Water security

Aim

Auckland captures, uses, and recycles water efficiently so that everyone has access to enough water of the appropriate quality to meet their needs.

Overall implementation update

Long-term water security

More water sources need to be developed over the next two decades to ensure long-term water security for Auckland's reticulated water users. Aucklanders use about 450 million litres of water every day. Watercare modelling indicates water consumption will rise to between 550-650 million litres a day by 2045. However, if Aucklander's per person consumption continues to track down as it has over the last 10 years, and follows the modelled likely pathway for consumption, total consumption is likely to be between 450-550 million litres a day by 2045, even with a high population projection.

The degree to which daily water use increases – either at the lower end or higher end of the range – will depend on Aucklanders' water use behaviours (including how we build, upgrade, and use our homes) combined with how much our population grows. Either way, more water will be needed to supply Aucklanders at some point in the future. Watercare is already increasing water supply in several ways, for example by increasing the capacity of existing reservoirs. However, these relatively small-scale upgrades will not provide enough water to meet Auckland's future demand. Because of the long lead in times required to develop major water source infrastructure (e.g. wastewater reuse and/or additional dam storage) decisions on future water source investment will be needed within a few years.

In rural communities, some water sources across Auckland are overallocated and Auckland Council is required to phase out over-allocation. This process will reduce water take from some sources over time. This may limit water for use from aquifers and streams in some areas, which is likely to impact Auckland's rural communities assuming similar demand.

The water strategy sets direction that in the future water will be captured, used, and recycled efficiently – with the overarching aim of ensuring water security for Aucklanders in both urban and rural communities. To achieve this, Auckland Council group is developing and progressing a suite of existing and new activities to:

- investigate and develop a range of feasible new water sources over time, including increased and diversified (non-dam) rainwater capture, wastewater reuse, and desalination
- an increasing focus on water efficiency for all water users
- proactively managing peak water demand to reduce water consumption from the reticulated network when demand for water is highest (over the hottest summer months), including by installing smart water meters.

Key updates across these activities are as follows.

- Watercare is updating its Metro Servicing Strategy (servicing strategy)[27]. In 2024/25, Watercare completed public consultation for the servicing strategy, and engaged council staff to provide input on the draft servicing strategy. The second phase of the servicing strategy that will incorporate this initial feedback will be shared in early 2026.
- Watercare staff are also working closely with the council's Policy department and 3-waters investment area oversight group to develop advice on upcoming major water infrastructure decisions for incoming elected members in early 2026.
- Watercare continues its work to develop wastewater reuse and desalination as future water source options.
- Watercare has continued to deliver its Water Efficiency Plan 2020-2025, and this plan is being refreshed over 2025/26 for the next five-year period.
- Watercare's smart meter roll out faced challenges over 2024/25. It was paused to review and reset the programme to ensure success (see Action 5.3 progress update below for more information).
- A proactive peak demand management plan (drafted by Watercare in 2023) was not progressed (see Action 5.3 progress update below for more information) and will be in 2025/26.
- Progress on policy to achieve increased rainwater collection from urban roofs has not resulted in changes to date.

Water security today

Watercare has processes in place to deliver on its Drought Management Plan 2023 (DMP) during extended dry periods. Over 2025, the DMP is being refreshed with a cross-council working group to incorporate clearer processes, and roles and responsibilities across the council group for drought response. The refreshed DMP is expected to be presented to the Policy and Planning Committee for adoption in early 2026.

Watercare brought the Pukekohe Water Treatment Plant back into service after it was severely damaged during the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods in 2023. Drawing water from a bore, it boosts the metropolitan water supply system by five million litres a day, which is around 1 per cent of average daily water demand.

Many Aucklanders are struggling with the cost of living and may not use water to reduce costs or may not be able to pay their water bill. There are support services (provided by Watercare and other agencies) in place to support Aucklanders who cannot afford their water expenses. However, Auckland Council has not progressed its position statement on affordable water access and a plan to achieve it (Actions 5.1 and 5.2 below).

Aucklanders in rural communities take water from aquifers and streams for domestic and commercial uses. For example, home use, for stock, schools, irrigation, wine making, water bottling, and vegetable washing. Drought has been assessed as a high-risk hazard with moderate consequences in a recent Auckland Emergency Management hazard risk assessment, with the greatest impacts felt by rural communities. Auckland Emergency Management and Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience have plans in place to support rural communities in the event of a drought (periods of low rainfall and limited water availability). Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 5.

[27] The Metropolitan servicing strategy sets the direction for the city's water supply and wastewater management for the next 70 years.

Table 5. Water Security (Shift 5) actions and their progress in years one and two; progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
2025 target for per person water consumption 253 litres per person per day (l/p/d)	2024/25: 257 l/p/d The 2025 target of 253 l/p/d has been exceeded by a small amount, water efficiency overall has improved on last year (and previous years) and 257 l/p/d is within the variation allowed for the target.[28] Overall, per person water consumption has been tracking down over the last 25 years, including over the last three years. The 2050 target (225 l/p/d) has been reviewed, and the existing target has been retained. This review identified issues with the calculation of per person water consumption in the previous two years reported. The number reported here is the updated estimate of per person water consumption (Appendix 2).	The correction to the calculation of per person water consumption has meant the target is exceeded by a small amount, although the amount is within the variation allowed for the target. Water efficiency will remain a focus over the next 5-year period.
Target for recycled water supply	The 2025 target of 20 million litres per day (MLD) has been achieved. 2024/25 capacity for recycled water 20 MLD.[29] The 2050 target is 100 MLD.	None.
5.1. Adopt a council position to address affordable water access	This action is progressing with challenges. A Policy department working group has progressed a needs assessment and identified next steps. This includes identifying robust evidence required to underpin Action 5.1, and its related Action 5.2.	There has been limited progress on this action over 2024/25. Staff capacity has been the main constraint and is expected to remain a challenge over the next year. Additional resourcing for staff and/or specialist technical advice is required; the timeframe for delivery will be adjusted.
5.2. Develop a plan to address affordable water access in Auckland	This action has not progressed.	This action relies on Action 5.1 being completed either first or together. A robust evidence base is required to develop this plan. The timeframe for delivery will be adjusted.
5.3. Add a level of service for and develop a plan to proactively manage both peak demand and drought response	This action has not progressed. However, Watercare continue to manage peak demand and have their drought response plan in place. The introduction of a new level of service has not been progressed. This was indicatively scoped to be delivered by the end of June 2024/25. Watercare continue to deliver their peak demand management practices, including: • monitoring climate conditions, water levels and demand • the Waterwise campaign and attending priority faults promptly • encourage non-potable water use for commercial activities. Watercare are refreshing the Drought Management Plan with input from across the council group, with expected completion by 2026.	Staff capacity limited progress on this action. Additional staff resourcing and technical specialist services are required to deliver this action. The timeframe for delivery will be adjusted. An assessment of the need for a new level of service and options for what it would specify is planned for 2025/26.

[28] This represents the 12-month rolling average consumption of drinking water per day per resident within the territorial authority district in litres per day +/- 5 litres, as of June 2025.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
5.4. Model climate change scenarios to understand impacts on water sources (ongoing)	This action is progressing. Watercare completed forecasting on the effects of climate change on its water sources. This information will guide future planning, for example for Watercare's Metropolitan Servicing Strategy. The council is considering the impacts of climate change on water quantity and quality, as required by the NPS-FM 2020. Staff are considering carefully the uncertainties in our ability to estimate future climate change impacts as they develop advice for regional policy and plan changes.	This action has a risk of both gaps and duplication as work is undertaken through multiple programmes across the council group. Staff across the group are working together to avoid duplication and work is planned to fill some identified gaps for climate impacts on ground and surface waterbodies.
5.5. Develop a smart demand management system to predict and manage peak demand using smart meter data and associated communication tools to engage Aucklanders (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. These challenges have been addressed by Watercare and the programme is restarting from 1 July 2025. Watercare has focused on installing smart meters at new water connections; where mechanical meters are broken; and where there are issues accessing a meter for reading.	Some of the smart meters installed had faults. Watercare paused the installation programme to review the issues and reset the programme. The smart meter roll out will re-start from 1 July 2025. Over the next three years, Watercare will install smart meters for all commercial customers, replace broken meters and install smart meters at all new connections.
5.6. Support central government to set targets for water efficient homes (ongoing)	This action has not progressed.	This action requires an implementation lead to be identified. This action will be reviewed, and the delivery timeframe will be updated.
5.7. Develop an investment plan for diverse sources to meet 2030 and 2050 targets, guided by te mauri o te wai for 2024 Long-term Plan	This action is progressing with challenges. Several workstreams across the council group are important contributors to the achievement of diverse water sources: • the Metro Servicing Strategy under development by Watercare is a key part of developing an investment plan for diverse sources. • Parks & Community Facilities – as a major water user – continue to work on improving water efficiency and options to reduce reticulated water use in favour of collecting rainwater from roofs and groundwater options.	There is no identified lead for this action and staff capacity has meant that limited progress has been made. Additional staff or specialist services resourcing is required and the timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated.
5.8. Develop policy to achieve target of 30% of urban roof area to collect rainwater for use 2050 (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. An assessment of consents data as a source of information about rainwater tank number, volume and use across the region was completed. Conclusions of the study were that consent data is not a viable source of information about the number, size and use of rain tanks in Auckland. Related work on rainwater collection underway across the council includes: • Investigating options to regulate rainwater collection (for non-potable use) through the Auckland Unitary Plan (Planning & Resource Consents). • Implementing a rainwater collection strategy and identifying opportunities to increase rainwater collection for non-potable use in council facilities (Parks and Community Facilities).	This action requires review, rescoping, and adequate resourcing to deliver.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
5.9. Develop regulations and targeted information to support Aucklanders to increase water capture for reuse (homes and businesses)	This action is progressing with challenges. The Watercare and Fletcher Living pilot homes project continued with data collection for the three-year study. This data will be used to inform assessments of the efficacy of these consumer products. This analysis is expected to be a useful input for the development of future regulations.	The indicative timeframe for delivering this action is by the end of 2026/27 – two years from now. To achieve this, an implementation lead and clear delivery commitment in a departmental delivery plan is required.
5.10. Monitor investments to meet water consumption reduction targets and review targets in 2024 (ongoing)	This action is complete for this reporting period. A review of consumption reduction targets was completed by Policy department staff, with input from Watercare staff. The review recommends that the existing targets are retained. To read the review, refer to Appendix 2 (page 52). Consumption targets will be reviewed again in approximately two years. Parks and Community Facilities (PCF) department: • engaged with high water-usage stakeholders on sustainable water use, resulting in significant reductions in water use at several sports parks. • have started planning a PCF pilot project to test enhanced technologies and best practices improving irrigation efficiency in sports parks, without compromising their turf quality. The pilot will begin in 2025/26. • are identifying and managing sites of low water efficiency more effectively, using data-driven and science-based approaches enabled by an improved irrigation database. • improved follow-up procedures on suspected leak cases identified through the tracking system managed by Watercare.	
5.11 Pursue pilots, community engagement, technology, and regulations to enable purified wastewater reuse (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation. Watercare's water reuse pilot plant is producing high quality water for comprehensive testing.	None.

Shift 6: Integrated land use and water planning

Aim

Water and its life-sustaining capacity is a central principle in land management and planning decisions.

Overall implementation update

This shift provides Auckland Council with a clear direction for *te mauri o te wai* as a key outcome for land use planning.

The council has maintained a focus on water planning as an aspect of integrated land use planning, despite significant changes in some principles and priorities for resource management between successive governments.

A notable change by central government has been the exclusion of Te Mana o te Wai (and its associated hierarchy of obligations) from consideration in resource consenting. This is one of several examples of te ao Māori being de-emphasised in matters relating to land use.[29] Despite this, the council remains committed to maintaining strong relationships with ngā iwi mana whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau and to addressing their clear message that our freshwater resources need to be improved, where they are degraded.

Through the freshwater plan change and related technical work we can expect significant improvements in a range of areas such as incorporating water sensitive design approaches in relevant planning and infrastructure processes and standards. It is noted that Auckland Transport's Sustainability Strategy 2024 will have an important role to increase water sensitive design across the transport network.

The community's awareness of water issues was heightened considerably by the 2023 Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. The council's storm response programme was efficient and strategically directed to support affected communities with recovery. This means that for the worst affected areas, management of future hazards will significantly improve in the near term, and the wider programme of work to address flood hazards across the region is ongoing.

While the council has learnt important lessons from recent events and implemented changes in some key areas, strategic-level approaches to land use planning that fully address water values and risks will take longer. They will be influenced by the final form of the changes to resource management legislation and by the organisation's ability to manage growth in ways that do not damage natural values, including those related to water.

Both the current and former government signalled spatial planning would have a key role in land use planning. This presents an important opportunity to respond spatially to this integration challenge across all of Auckland. However, if spatial visions don't translate to structure plans and into plan provisions with legal standing, we are unlikely to achieve fully integrated land use and water planning.

Work is underway to implement the Auckland Transport Sustainability Strategy 2024-2031 [30] (sustainability strategy), which directs integration of sustainable urban development and environmental resilience into its activities. In particular, the sustainability strategy supports water-sensitive transport planning by promoting green infrastructure like permeable surfaces and rain gardens, reducing stormwater runoff, and minimising pollution. The sustainability strategy also reflects a commitment to te ao Māori values,

[29] The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 (the Amendment Act) amended sections 92, 104, and Schedule 4 of the Resource Management Act 1991.
[30] Auckland Transport Sustainability Strategy 2024-2031.

collaborative planning, and delivering infrastructure that supports long-term environmental and community wellbeing.

Overall, the nine actions identified to support implementation of this strategic shift are progressing well. Two are completed in this reporting period. Three are progressing well and four are progressing well but have not been completed by their indicative timeframe. Several delays relate to requirements of plan change processes and central government direction to the council. The timeframes for delivery of these actions will be adjusted to reflect these changes and revised delivery timeframes. Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Strategic shift 6 actions and their progress in years one and two: progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
6.1. Embed te mana o te wai as a central consideration in all plan change processes, including the development of council-initiated plan changes and when providing evidence on private plan changes	This action is progressing with challenges. Plan changes must give effect to the NPS-FM 2020, which includes Te Mana o Te Wai and the associated hierarchy of obligations. including its objective (cl 2.1), which is the hierarchy of obligations Some information on how the Auckland Unitary Plan addresses te mana o te wai can be found in RMA section 35 plan efficiency and effectiveness monitoring reports. On the issue of growth, the high-level findings were that the Auckland Unitary Plan ensured the effects on waterways are a key consideration in structure planning for large-scale land use change in greenfield areas. However, it also concluded that the Auckland Unitary Plan could be more directive regarding water-related matters that plan changes should address.	Comprehensive reporting on this action is challenging because the council does not track the degree to which plan changes and evidence given on private plan changes embed Te Mana o Te Wai (the hierarchy of obligations that places the health of water before human uses of water). This action may be affected by the government decision in July 2025 requiring the council to halt all plan changes and associated processes that are deemed unnecessary. This action will be reviewed, and the delivery timeframe will be updated if required.
6.2. Resource and enhance the council's capability to effectively implement the Essential Freshwater Package	This action is complete for this reporting period. The council has resourced and enhanced the council's capability to effectively implement the remaining elements of the government's freshwater package. This has included: The large-scale programme to prepare for a freshwater plan change to implement the NPS-FM 2020 will continue. A Catchment Context GIS platform has been developed. This platform will support farmers to complete their freshwater farm plans, which will be required in future. The platform is planned to be launched in 2026. The council completed a submission on freshwater elements of the National Direction consultation packages. The submission was lodged on 26 July 2025.	Central government signalled changes to several instruments within the Essential Freshwater package (as named by the former government). The council no longer refers to the Essential Freshwater package, but all instruments from this package continue to exist and progress, subject to change proposals by central government.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
6.3. Review and improve spatial planning processes to consider water consistently and advocate for statutory weight for structure plans	This action is progressing. The Southern Rural Strategy (SRS) was adopted in May 2025.This spatial plan provides a vision and framework to guide urban growth and development in rural areas of south Auckland. It directs minimal disruption to the natural environment (including waters) as growth occurs, and that growth be used as an opportunity for natural environment regeneration. A draft Natural Hazard Plan Change - expected to support spatial planning outcomes for water – is intended to be incorporated into the 'Integrated Intensification Plan Change' (which also includes a replacement to parts of the Intensification Plan Change – PC 78). See Action 6.8 for more information. Plan Change 80 has been made operative. The amendments to the Regional Policy Statement enhance spatial planning processes. Development of a land use simulation model is a three-year project and is progressing.	Central government's resource management reform programme potentially creates new challenges and opportunities in the use of spatial planning and structure planning to achieve a good balance of land use change and environmental protection and enhancement. The statutory weight of structure plans for greenfield developments remains uncertain. The council will continue to provide submissions on these issues to central government. The council will continue to plan for the refresh of the Auckland Unitary Plan, in the context of any new legislation that will apply in future years. This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery will be updated.
6.4. Develop a regional blue-green network spatial plan	This action is progressing. The creation of a Regional Blue-Green Network spatial tool has progressed, supporting the integration of related programmes or projects across multiple teams and departments. In 2024/25 milestones includes: • engagement with key internal users • data inventory for spatial tool completed • developed pilot spatial viewer with data layers • started assessment of the performance (for example, accessibility, connectivity and ecosystem health) of the blue-green network. A staff information hub on this project will be launched in 2025/26.	This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated. Progress on this action relies on prioritisation for technology services resourcing. This initiative is considered high priority for the 3 waters investment area and good quality communications on the proposal are being produced to support discussions with Technology Services.
6.5. Develop a position to limit development in, and remove vulnerable structures from, high risk water related natural hazard areas	This action is progressing. The Natural Hazards plan change is intended to be incorporated into the Integrated Intensification Plan Change. Refer to Action 6.8 for more information. Multiple departments across the council group continue to provide evidence to support the Natural Hazard plan change as well as delivering operational activity that responds to development that has occurred in high-risk areas. For example, the council now expects to acquire 1200 storm-affected or high-risk properties. The council adopted the Storm Affected Land Use Policy to guide land use decisions on a site-by-site basis, including whether properties should be retained by council or safely divested.	This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
6.6. Review, develop and grow the council's Strategic Approach to Sediment Programme (ongoing)	This action is complete for this reporting period. Cross-council workshops held to identify priority areas, including improving compliance of land disturbance activities, and adopting new technology to control and manage sediment inputs into harbours. The priorities and next steps were presented to the Policy & Planning Committee in late 2024.[31] Several reports were published that will inform future work to reduce sediments: • Unsealed roads data quality accuracy and summary report.[32] • Mapping bare earth areas from Cyclone Gabrielle 2023.[33] The Policy department progressed several projects with key stakeholders: • Whatipu Stream sediment monitoring post Gabrielle in 2023 • bulk earthworks compliance of ponds • bi-annual Community of Practice meetings • Field days with the earthworks sector of construction industry • monitoring and machine learning from the sediment detention ponds • upgrades to software for real time discharge camera and sensor sites across Auckland • region-wide bare earth investigation • exploring changing land use over the past 20 years and comparing sediment retention by retired and planted land before and after Cyclone Gabrielle.	None. Staff will continue to progress improving compliance outcomes by working with the earthworks sector, engineers and community groups.
6.7. Investigate and continuously improve the council's understanding and management of cumulative effects to protect and enhance mauri (ongoing)	This action is progressing. A change in freshwater resource management from effects-based to limits-based management has directed councils to consider cumulative effects at an FMU and/or catchment scale. Issues and options papers were drafted to consider how to better manage the impact of cumulative effects of key freshwater stressors in the Auckland region through the Auckland Unitary Plan and related non-regulatory actions. See Action 8.2 for related work on cumulative effects.	While our understanding of cumulative effects on freshwater bodies will improve through the NPS-FM implementation, major challenges will remain in the management of these effects in terms of the drivers and pressures that cause the effects (e.g. urban development). This is a challenge for both regulatory planning and investment planning and would need a concerted effort across multiple investment areas over time.

[31] Update on Strategic Approach to Sediment (SAS) Programme.
[32] Unsealed roads data quality accuracy and summary report.
[33] Mapping bare earth areas from Cyclone Gabrielle 2023.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
6.8. Avoid further development in water-related natural hazard areas in all plan change processes and ensure regulations take a precautionary and risk-based approach (ongoing)	This action is progressing. Plan Change 78 is operative in part (city centre) and on hold for other areas. It is expected to be replaced by the proposed Integrated Intensification Plan Change[34], which aims to improve identification of areas exposed to hazards, such as flooding, coastal inundation, erosion, and subsidence. It will introduce a risk-based approach to managing development, with stricter policies for high-risk areas. Notification is planned for October 2025 pending elected member endorsement and Resource Management Act changes.	A central government directive in July 2025 to halt all plan changes will not affect the delivery of this action, as progressing natural hazard and intensification plan changes will be exempt from this law change expected in August 2025, and central government are supportive of the proposed Integrated Intensification Plan Change expected for October 2025. A review of this action will be undertaken and next steps to improve implementation identified and progressed.
6.9. Deliver a package of non-regulatory and regulatory interventions to support the uptake of water-sensitive design processes and ongoing management of devices (ongoing)	This action is progressing. There are multiple teams across the council involved in the delivery of this action. Through the freshwater plan change programme has developed reports detailing issues, options and next steps for stormwater and water sensitive design. Next steps, including regulatory and non-regulatory interventions to support uptake, are underway. Non-regulatory initiatives underway include: • improving project design, including the improved use of water sensitive design in parks and open space projects • improving business case templates that include full economic valuation models and life-cycle costs of water sensitive design • guidance on retrofitting water sensitive design into brownfield areas • reviewing technical design guidance for stormwater devices, hydrologic design, waster sensitive design for stormwater, and sediment and erosion control (GD01, GD02 and GD04 and GD05). • The Auckland Transport Sustainability Strategy was adopted in May 2024 will have a key role in water sensitive design in future years	None.

[34] This plan change will combine two plan changes that have been under development – one on intensification and one on natural hazards.

Shift 7: Restoring and enhancing water ecosystems

Aim

Auckland has thriving and sustainable natural water ecosystems that support life, food gathering and recreation.

Overall implementation update

This shift is largely focused on the non-regulatory action the council takes to restore and enhance water ecosystems. The council undertakes a broad range of activity across multiple departments and council-controlled organisations that can be considered water ecosystems restoration or enhancement. This shift addresses some of the challenges for the council's work in this area, including:

- working in partnership with mana whenua on te mauri o te wai making sure the council group has clear priorities and targets against which to measure success
- evaluating and improving the council group's investment decisions and impacts
- increasing and improving the council group's application of integrated catchment management (or similar) to ensure coordination and alignment of projects within a catchment.

Across the council group, there is work underway on specific projects and programmes to take a catchment-based approach; engage with mana whenua; and evaluate and improve investment wherever possible. In 2024/25, the council has:

- reviewed the Natural Environment Targeted Rate to evaluate and improve investment decisions
- delivered an Environment Assessment for the Manukau Harbour and mana whenua engagement as part of the catchment-scale Achieving Better Environmental Outcomes for the Manukau Harbour initiative
- progressed the Puhinui Regeneration programme and continued to support of the Kaipara Moana Remediation - two catchment scale programmes focused on the restoring te mauri o te wai from mountains to sea
- identified a need to investigate catchment community groups as a key non-regulatory mechanism for achieving freshwater outcomes.

The three actions underway in association with this shift are progressing; however, review of the actions in this shift are needed and delivery planning required once that review has been completed. The freshwater plan change programme is expected to deliver clear priorities and targets for region's freshwater, taking adjoining coastal receiving environments into consideration. Mana whenua engagement is embedded into this programme. More shift detail is provided on each action in Table 7.

Table 7. Strategic shift 7 actions and their progress in years one and two: progress made in year three: and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
7.1. Develop methods to assess mauri for Auckland's freshwater ecosystems, in partnership with mana whenua	This action is progressing with challenges. This action is being delivered by departments and council-controlled organisations across the council group through place-based relationships with individual iwi representatives on specific projects and programmes. Individual mana whenua entities are in various stages of developing and delivering mauri assessment frameworks and methodologies. In future, this work will contribute to enhanced decision making for water ecosystems by the council, and partnership with mana whenua for restoration. See Action 1.1 for more detail on delivery of Te Mauri o Te Wai frameworks and assessments with individual iwi/hapū.	This action requires a review and update of the approach based on initial findings. The reference to 'freshwater' in this action is an error that will be corrected in the review of the action wording. This action is overdue the timeframe indicated for completion. This will be updated.
7.2. Develop targets and priorities to improve the mauri of freshwater ecosystems, in partnership with mana whenua	This action is progressing with challenges. This action is being delivered by departments and council-controlled organisations through place-based relationships with individual iwi representatives on specific projects and programmes. In particular, the work to progress a freshwater plan change – based on extensive mana whenua engagement – is expected to progress the identification of targets and priorities for freshwater improvement across the region.	This action does not have a lead to oversee and ensure its implementation. A lead will be identified to scope and deliver this action. The reference to 'freshwater' in this action is an error that will be corrected.
7.3. Improve our understanding of freshwater ecosystems and pressures (ongoing)	This action is progressing. Environmental Evaluation and Monitoring (EEMU) completed five yearly state and trend analysis on water (State of the Environment reporting), providing updated and new insights on the health of our water systems. This includes improved understanding of faecal contamination sources in fresh water and nutrient and sediment susceptibility of Auckland estuaries. The Environmental Services department are trialling methods to manage pest fish and aquatic pest plants to maintain and enhance native biodiversity and water quality at Lake Rototoa and Lake Tomarata. eDNA surveillance of freshwater golden clam (*Corbicula fluminea)* was completed at six high risk, high value lakes.	The reference to 'freshwater' in this action is an error that will be corrected.
7.4. Develop an investment framework and strategic investment plan to guide funding and incentive opportunities (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation. The council's new investment framework provides a foundation for achieving the intent of this action.	This action will be reviewed in 2025/26 to assess whether it can be incorporated into the council's new investment area framework.
7.5. Take a catchment-based approach to management of waterways protection and enhancement (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation. The Policy department completed a Manukau Harbour Environmental Assessment that will guide the council's activities to ensure the health of the harbour. The Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department developed a broad catchment prioritisation framework to guide rural grant spending to achieve a greater cumulative impact in higher risk areas and are developing tools to integrate urban catchment planning with asset maintenance and infrastructure development.	None.

Shift 8: Pooling knowledge

Aim

Auckland has the knowledge about water to make good quality, timely, and strategic decisions about water.

Overall implementation update

This shift aims to catalyse a culture change across the council group – encouraging the sharing of knowledge across departments and council-controlled organisations and better connecting teams in the ownership of knowledge and insights.

When the water strategy was developed and adopted in 2021-2022, data, information and knowledge management practices were identified as a significant challenge to making well-informed decisions for water management across the council group.

Since then, Auckland Council has prioritised data management and has:

- created and recruited a data governance team (2023)
- adopted a data governance policy (2024) and launched its new data management platform Informatica (2025)
- created and recruited a Māori data role to progress Māori data policy and training (2024).

Knowledge management[35] practises remain under-developed across the organisation. A knowledge management framework for water has been developed. This implementation of this framework by relevant teams would result in a significant development of knowledge management for water across the organisation (Table 8, Action 8.1).

Three actions under this shift are being delivered and these are progressing well and are expected to be completed in due course. Delivery of these actions is taking longer than originally anticipated for several reasons (such as the time needed to create new roles and recruiting not being factored into initial timeframe estimates). The timeframes for delivery will be updated to reflect these changes. Further detail on the actions within this strategic shift can be found in Table 8.

[35] Knowledge refers to the information and insights that people within an organisation hold.

Table 8. Strategic shift 8 actions and their progress in years one and two; progress made in year three; and challenges and mitigation controls.

Action and RAG status	Progress made in year three	Challenges and mitigation
8.1. Implement a council group knowledge governance framework for water (ongoing)	This action is progressing with challenges. Completed a Knowledge Governance Framework and associated tools, with input from across the organisation. Continuing to create a knowledge system for climate adaptation planning (Resilient Tāmaki Makaurau programme).	This action is overdue for the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated. The next step is to seek senior level adoption of the framework for implementation by staff.
8.2. Build a robust evidence base to support the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management plan change in 2024.[36]	This action is progressing. This work is being progressed across multiple departments, programmes and projects and will be used to inform future target setting and limits, as well as departmental work programmes.	This action is overdue for the timeframe indicated for completion. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be updated.
8.3. Develop a consistent council approach to working with Treaty partners and their mātauranga	This action is progressing. Auckland Council adopted a data governance policy and launched a new data management system 'Informatica'. A specialist Māori data role is established to deliver a Māori data guidance document with mana whenua and mataawaka. Engagement to co-develop key elements of this guidance is expected to start in 2025/26. A Māori data e-learning was created for staff and is available on Tupu.	This action requires more time to complete than the indicative timeline. The timeframe for delivery of this action will be adjusted.
8.4 Evaluate and where required improve 'whole of policy cycle' environmental management across the council group (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation but may progress in year four.	None.
8.5 Enable Aucklanders' ability to readily access and contribute to water data, information, and knowledge (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation. The website, Flooded.co.nz, remains live for future events. Information submitted by Aucklanders has been tagged and geocoding improved. See action 1.3 on work to increase accessibility of environmental monitoring information to Aucklanders.	None.
8.6 Develop external partnerships for innovation, research, and development (ongoing)	This action is not a part of year three implementation. The Engineering, Assets and Technical Advisory department partner with research organisations on a range of initiatives. For example, Environmental Evaluation and Monitoring contribute to a Cawthron-led MBIE programme studying changes in marine microalgal communities [37]. The Chief Sustainability Office co-funded Earth Sciences New Zealand's modelling of an alternative Cyclone Gabrielle path over Auckland. The resulting hazard datasets (weather, coastal, flood) will inform future council work and public engagement.	None.

[36] The government changed the deadline for a plan change to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management to December 2027 to allow time for implementation of revisions to the policy statement that are planned in 2025.

[37] Cawthron: Changing Microalgal Communities

Appendix 2: Action 5.10 water target review

Overview

Auckland Council expects Auckland homes and businesses will continue to increase water efficiency over the next 25 years because of technological advances, behavioural change and regulatory changes (both in New Zealand and abroad).

By improving water efficiency, we can reduce growing pressures on our water supply system and push out the timeframe required for new water sources to come online.

Based on updated modelling and in consultation with Watercare and the Chair of the Policy and Planning Committee, Auckland Council has decided against changing the gross water demand target for 2050, which is set at 225 litres per person per day (l/p/d). Auckland Council staff will review the target again in 2027, with data available from 2025-2027.

Background

Over the last 12 months, council staff have worked in partnership with Watercare staff to review the water consumption target as set in the water strategy. This review is a part of delivery of Action 5.10 in the water strategy. When the target was adopted in 2021, there were questions from elected members about whether it could be more ambitious. It was agreed that the target would be reviewed in year 3 of the water strategy's implementation.

The current target is 225 litres per person per day (+/- 5) by 2050

The water strategy established regional targets to reduce gross per capita consumption to 225 l/p/d by 2050.[38] Targets were also set for achievement by 2025 (≤253 l/p/d) and 2030 (≤247 l/p/d).

The 2050 target was informed by joint modelling between Auckland Council and Watercare Services Limited, undertaken in 2020/21 to forecast water use over 30 years, considering an increasing population and various water efficiency assumptions and initiatives.

The model was underpinned by a set of assumptions agreed with Watercare about improving water use efficiency through to 2050 (December 2024 - March 2025). The assumptions include:

- improving technology: gradual uptake of more water efficient appliances and fixtures in homes
- installation of commercial and residential smart meters, which is in progress
- a small increase in homes with outdoor rainwater tanks (supplementing reticulated supply) by 2050
- improved water efficiency in non-residential settings and industry
- reduced leakage through ongoing monitoring and responses by Watercare
- behaviour change through ongoing education programmes.

[38] The targets are for gross per capita consumption and relate to all water consumed from the metropolitan network, including commercial use and leakage, as well as residential use.

How Auckland is tracking towards the water demand targets

Watercare regularly reports on water use per person via its board papers and quarterly and annual reports. According to Watercare's 2024 Annual Report, water consumption was 252 l/p/d for 2023/24, indicating that Auckland was achieving the 2025 target.

In contrast, Auckland Council's calculations show consumption to be 262 l/p/d for the same period. The differences between results can be seen in Figure 4. This highlights that the council and Watercare have been using different population estimates when calculating water use per person.

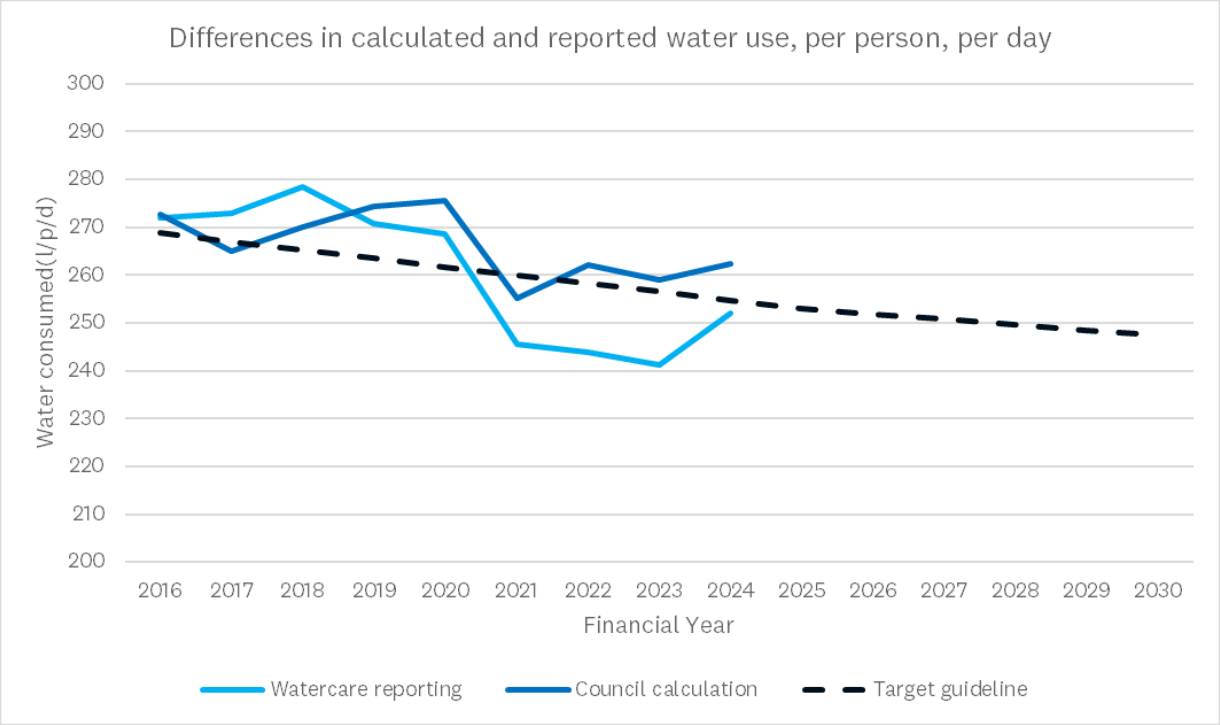


Figure 4. Watercare and Auckland Council staff calculations of water consumption per person per day

Watercare's population estimate is taken from the 2018 census and Watercare has assumed a 1.8% increase in population per year since that date. This population figure has become significantly out-of-step with recent Statistics New Zealand estimates of Auckland's population. In reporting in 2024, Auckland's population was overstated by 90,000, which resulted in lower gross water consumption per person per day being reported.

Auckland Council staff use the most recent population estimate published by Statistics New Zealand when calculating water use per person, which includes population changes during and after Covid.

Between December 2024 – March 2025, Auckland Council advised Watercare staff of the need to update the population data used for calculating water use per person, which will utilise the annually updated Statistics NZ estimates. Watercare and Auckland Council have also agreed that non-metro consumption and population will be included when calculating gross water consumption per person. The inclusion of non-metro increases gross water consumption per person by 1 litre per day.

Using the latest Statistics New Zealand estimates for Auckland's population has resulted in a gross water consumption per person per day estimate of 257 l/p/d – meaning that the 2025 target has not been met and was exceeded by a small amount.

Auckland Council has reviewed the targets to check whether they are still appropriate

In reviewing the consumption targets adopted in 2022, Auckland Council staff have:

- updated the original modelling that supported the target setting with actual consumption data from 2021-2024
- updated the assumptions for improved water efficiency, in consultation with Watercare
- reset the baseline year for the targets to the 2024 financial year, which represents a period of 'typical' rainfall. In contrast, the previous modelling used a baseline year leading up to the 2020 drought (a period of low rainfall and high-water demand).

The updated modelling has demonstrated that the existing target of 225 l/p/d by 2050 is realistic and achievable.

Updated projections for Auckland's water demand through to 2050

Figure 5 shows the range of plausible scenarios for annual average daily water consumption from 2025 to 2050, according to the council's updated modelling. These scenarios range from 193 l/p/d (Maximum Plausible Efficiency) to 265 l/pd (Baseline – no efficiencies) in 2050. However, Auckland Council staff do not consider it to be plausible that water use per person will be higher in 2050 than it is today.

The solid green line (2020 Projected Pathway) represents the existing target of 225 l/p/d by 2050, informed by modelling undertaken in 2020/21. The solid blue line (2024 Projected Pathway) represents the updated modelling and assumptions, which suggests a target of 210 l/p/d could be achieved.

While the updated modelling implies that a more ambitious target could be achievable, Council have decided to maintain the existing target and review it again in 2027.

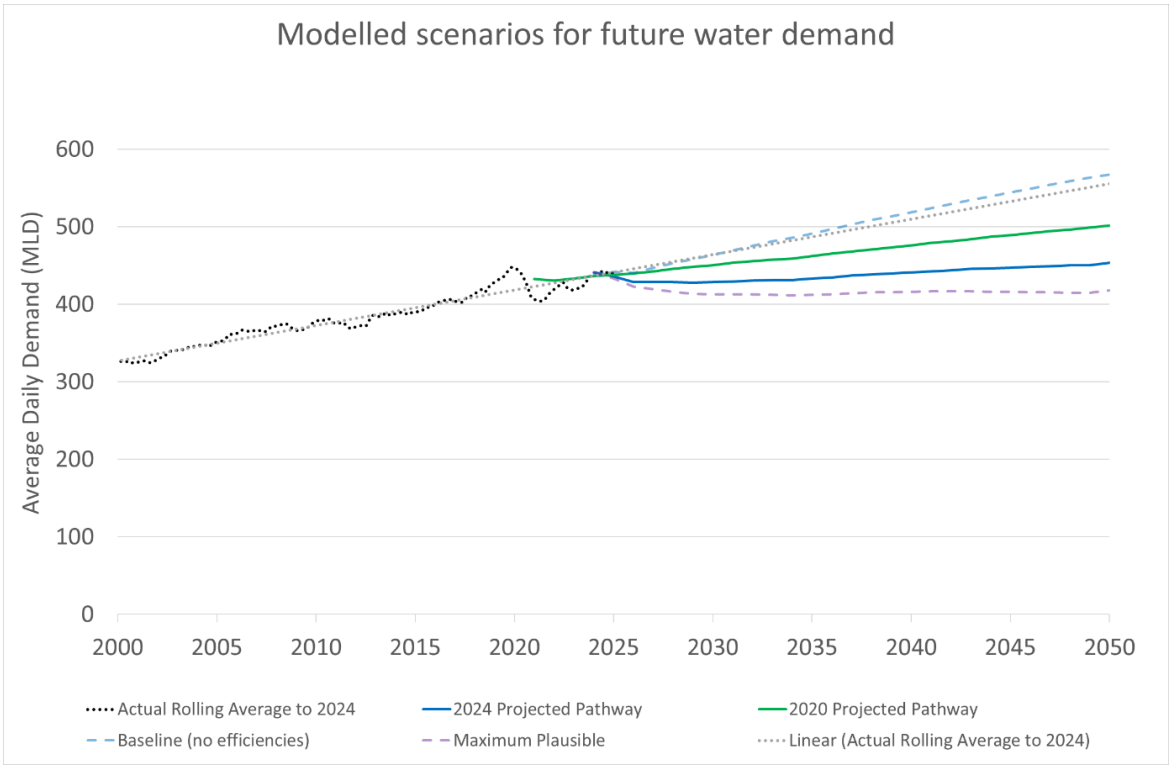


Figure 5. Modelled scenarios for future water demand. The pathways shown are based on a medium population projection from the Auckland Growth Scenario 2023 version 1.1.

Appendix 3: Government water services and resource management reforms

Water Services

- The labour government's Water Services Reform ended in November 2023
- New legislation includes:
    - Local Water Done Well and the Water Services Repeal Act 2024
    - Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024 (requires regional water services delivery plans)
    - Local Government (Water Services) Bill 2024
    - Oversight of water services regulators by the Commerce Commission.

Resource management and freshwater instruments

- Phase 1: Repeal of the Natural and Built Environment Act 2023 and the Spatial Planning Act 2023
- Phase 2:
    - Fast Track Approvals Act 2024
    - Two Resource Management Amendment Bills (Freshwater and Other Matters; Consenting and Other Systems Changes)
        - Refocused national direction across four packages: Infrastructure and development, Primary sector, Freshwater, and Going for Housing Growth
    - Phase 3: Planned replacement of the RMA with two new bills in late 2025:
        - A Natural Environment Act – focused on planning to enable development and infrastructure.
        - A Planning Act – focused on planning to enable development and infrastructure.
- July 2025: Proposed amendment to the Resource Management (Consenting and Other Systems Changes) Bill to stop councils from progressing unnecessary plan and regional policy statement reviews, with some exemptions.

Te pūrongo-ā-tau a te rautaki wai ki Tāmaki Makaurau
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