

Mayoral Responses to 14 December 2023 letter from Greater Wellington Chair regarding Wellington Metro Area water shortages

Email from Mayor Baker: 18 December 2024: 11.46am

Hi Daran

Thank you for your letter.

The draft Long-Term Plan for Porirua City Council has budgeted costs for water meters in the first 3 years recognising the likely implementation framework for this project.

There is clearly still some consultation and communication required with our community, but we feel confident we can manage this outside of the Long-Term Plan process once we have greater certainty around costs, timing and other implementation factors. Like you, we believe that the case for water meters has been made by the excellent work done by Wellington Water in the strategic business case and the follow up work culminating in the recent workshop.

Unfortunately, our own financial constraints mean we are unable to afford the level of renewals for water assets that is desirable. Our proposed rates rise is currently sitting at 17.5% and I think you will agree this is stretching the household affordability capacity of many of our residents. Unlike others we have used the funding provided by the previous Government around water reform to invest to the maximum possible in our water assets.

In summary, we are doing the best we can. We see water meters as one of the most cost-effective methods of identifying the deficiencies in our water assets and enables us to invest wisely in priorities across the network.

Regards

Anita Baker

Mayor

Koromatua

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Email from Mayor Barry: 20 December 2024: 4.01pm

Kia ora Daran,

Thank you for your letter dated 14 December 2023 regarding Wellington Metro Area Water Shortages.

Hutt City Council is taking seriously the possibility of water shortages. We are doing all that we can reasonably do within our capacity to mitigate the situation in the short and medium term.

As well as increasing our budget investment for universal water meters from \$30M in the 2021- 2031 Long Term Plan to \$72M in the draft 2024-34 Long Term Plan, as based on advice from Wellington Water, we have committed additional funding to fix water leaks and have increased investment in renewals. I can confirm that we will be consulting our community on this increased investment.

I was unaware of the powers available to Greater Wellington regarding the setting of water allocation limits and the imposing of surcharges. I would be keen to further understand the process for enacting this power.

Water is the most fundamental of needs for the wellbeing of our communities. It is imperative that the Metro Councils work collaboratively with Greater Wellington Regional Council to do all we can to avert water shortages.

Ngā mihi,

Campbell

Campbell Barry

[Te Koromatua o Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai | Mayor of Lower Hutt](#)

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Email from Mayor Whanau: 22 January 2024: 9.21am

Kia ora Daran

Thank you for your letter following up on September's Wellington Water Shortage Summit and where universal water metering fits within our draft LTPs. I apologise for not replying sooner as I had intended to do so before Christmas.

Due to the timing of when we received Wellington Water's advice for the LTP we haven't had the opportunity to formally discuss options for funding three waters infrastructure as a whole Council but we will most certainly be discussing water funding this month as a priority as part of our LTP discussions. Planning for smart meters will be part of that. While there are no easy fixes, our Council is committed to working together with other councils and Wellington Water to get on top of this. I am personally committed to increasing our investment in water even further.

As I stated in my media release yesterday, the council has been working hard to expand investment. We have significantly increased our funding for water over the last few years. In the first year of the 2021/2031 Long Term Plan (LTP), we boosted our capital investment in three waters by 33%. Over the last three years we have provided WWL with an additional \$25 million in opex funding over and above what was approved in our 2021-31 LTP, and much of this has been directed to detecting and fixing leaks. Just before Christmas we approved \$2 million in extra funding for Wellington Water to fix as many leaks as possible over the coming months.

At present the recommendation we have received from officers is to fund a business case for water meters in the first 3 years of the 2024-2034 LTP and to signal planned installation in the years following. Our CFO Andrea Reeves has been liaising with the other shareholding councils and confirms that this is the same proposed approach as that being taken by Porirua City Council. Water meters do come at a significant cost and we need to be able to provide the details and options needed to properly consult on this change. However, in the light of increasing concern about drinking water supply the Council will consider whether it is possible to do this more quickly, notwithstanding our funding and financing limitations. We must also all consider the suite of initiatives needed to improve the sustainability of water supply, delivery and consumption; including construction of new water storage.

I appreciate that Greater Wellington Regional Council also needs to consult with the community prior to committing to a build programme for new water storage facilities. It would be helpful for our planning if you could give an indication regarding when new water storage would likely move from planning stages into the build and operative stages and how this will be included in your LTP.

With regards to your comment on the application of the provision for Greater Wellington to set water allocation limits and impose surcharges over the next three years I just note that any additional surcharge will impact our financial ability to manage our aging water infrastructure and would therefore not help our shared goal of sustainable water supply and delivery.

Lastly, we are all collectively addressing a long legacy of underinvestment that has reached a tipping point. I am committed to working with the councils of the region on how we address this and on a regional model that is fit for purpose for the future.

Chat soon.

Nga mihi nui

Tory Whanau

Mayor of Wellington | Wellington City Council

EA: Tiimalu Sialava'a 021 710 283



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR CITY OF UPPER HUTT

Daran Ponter
Chair
Greater Wellington
via email

File: 301/61-011

29 January 2024

Kia ora Daran

I write in response to your correspondence of 14 December 2023 asking for confirmation of Council's commitment to addressing demand management of potable water.

At the time of your request Council was still grappling with the many challenges and financial pressures of preparing its 2024-34 Long Term Plan (LTP) and while that process continues, I am pleased to advise that last week Councillors agreed to include funding for a business case for water meters in the first three years of the 2024-2034 LTP and to signal planned installation in the years following. Council officers have been liaising with the other shareholding councils and confirms that this is the same proposed approach as that being taken by Porirua City Council and Wellington City Council. The rationale for this is that water meters do come at a significant cost and we need details and options to properly consult with our community on this change.

However, in the light of increasing concern about drinking water supply, Council recognises that water meters are more of a medium term action, and in the short term are focussing on ensuring network leakage is also addressed. To this end, in the current financial year we are significantly increasing OPEX funding to Wellington Water (WWL) and will find OPEX for leak repairs at the WWL requested level for the next three years. In this context we also note that WWL have advised that approximately 4% of our water reticulation network is in poor condition and so we are considering how to refocus our renewals programme (CAPEX) on address that deficit once we understand what the benefits of this investment would be.

I would also point out that Upper Hutt is the only metropolitan council in the Wellington region which has year round water restrictions (level 1) in place and has enforced this. We also have one of, if not the highest rate, of penetration of emergency storage tanks in the region.

Finally we appreciate that Greater Wellington Regional Council also needs to consult with the community prior to committing to a build programme for new water storage facilities. It would be helpful for financial planning if you could give an indication regarding when new water storage would likely move from planning stages into the build and operative stages and what the impact of this will be on the bulk water levy and our Long Term Plan.

Nga mihi



Wayne Guppy
Koromatua | Mayor

Cc: Mayor Tory Whanau, Wellington City Council
Mayor Campbell Barry, Hutt City Council
Mayor Anita Baker, Porirua City Council
Chief Executives Greater Wellington, Wellington, Hutt and Porirua City Councils
Nick Leggett, Chair Wellington Water
Tonia Haskell, Chief Executive Wellington Water