



# Our Plan for Our Water

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Local Water Done Well  
Consultation Document

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**ROTORUA**  
LAKES COUNCIL

The background of the page is a photograph of a shallow stream with clear water flowing over rocks. In the upper left corner, a green fern frond is partially visible, its leaves extending towards the center. The water is dark and reflective, with some light catching the surface. The overall tone is natural and serene.

Toitū te marae o Tāne,  
Toitū te marae o Tangaroa,  
Ka toitū te tangata.

If the land is well,  
and the sea is well,  
the people will be well.

A decorative graphic element in the bottom left corner consisting of a series of overlapping triangles in various shades of grey and green, creating a diamond-like pattern.

This is a locally developed plan to respond to government direction on water supply, wastewater and stormwater - commonly known as 'Local Water Done Well'.



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## He karere nā te Manukura Mayor's message

Tēnā rā tātau katoa e ngā haporo nui o te takiwā nei.

E anga nui te aroaro ki te rerenga mai o te rā, he rā hou ka huraina.

Greetings to the many communities in our district.

Let us fix our gaze to the rising of the sun, a new day will be revealed.

We're working hard to ensure that water services in Rotorua remain safe, sustainable, and future-proofed. We know how important our water sources and services are to our community and to our environment.

As part of this Government's Local Water Done Well policy, our Council needs to develop a plan for how to best deliver water services in Rotorua. So we need to have an important discussion with you, Te Tiriti partners and all our community, on the plan we think will work best for Rotorua. This is what this document is all about and we look forward to receiving your feedback on the proposed way forward.

Compared to many places around New Zealand, Rotorua is currently in a strong position with our current infrastructure and water services, our Council having already committed significant investment into these critical services to benefit current and future communities, as well as our environment.

Discussions around water services over the past few years have shown there is a strong desire to keep Rotorua water services local and affordable and Council is in agreement with this.

Our plan, which is explained in this consultation document, addresses these concerns and would ensure Council and our community maintain ownership, control and input into our local water services.

We're proposing to keep Rotorua water services within Council for now, because we're in a good position to do so, and because we believe this is currently what our community wants. We're also proposing to have discussions with other Bay of Plenty councils to understand how a multi-council waters organisation could work in future and possibly benefit Rotorua as we grow. By 2027 we'd then make a decision about moving forward with a water services council-controlled organisation, either with other councils or on our own.



The models available to us are outlined in this document, along with a proposed transition plan.

We appreciate the Government giving us the opportunity to keep decision-making local and allowing us time to consult with our community on this important matter.

Once we've considered all feedback, Council will make a final decision about our preferred delivery plan, which needs to be submitted to Government in September.

The decision we need to make as a Council is very important and will have a long-term impact for Rotorua, so we want to make sure we get it right.

To do this, we need your feedback. Please take the time to understand each of the water service delivery models and let us know which one you think will deliver the best outcomes for Rotorua.

Your voice and your views are critical to helping us choose the right way forward and to helping us create a better Rotorua for all.

Mauriora ki a tātau.

Let us thrive together.



**Tania Tapsell**  
**Her Worship the Mayor of Rotorua**

## Te Kupu Whakataki Introduction

Local Water Done Well is the Government's plan to address New Zealand's current and future water infrastructure challenges.

It covers drinking water, wastewater and stormwater and requires Councils to decide how to deliver these services and related infrastructure in future. Councils must consult with their communities on a preferred option and present analysis of at least one other option.

The Local Water Done Well legislation recognises the importance of local decision-making, outlines the framework for delivery of water services and aims to ensure a strong focus on investing sufficiently, ring-fencing funding for water services and meeting economic, environmental and water quality regulatory requirements.

A key feature of Local Water Done Well is that it gives councils the flexibility to determine the best structure and delivery method for their water services. Councils can choose to deliver water services directly through an in-house council division, or they can establish new water services CCOs (Council Controlled Organisations) that are more financially and operationally independent of the council's direct oversight. There could also be a combination of options over time.

Rotorua Lakes Council's preferred option is that water services be delivered in-house until 2028, then delivered by a water services council-controlled organisation (WSCCO) from July 2028 onwards.

Discussions with other Bay of Plenty councils, specifically those in the eastern Bay of Plenty (Kawerau, Ōpōtiki and Whakatāne District councils) will begin, with a view to ensuring there is flexibility to move to a multi-council WSCCO model in future if appropriate. This would align with central government expectations that councils pursue multi-council WSCCOs.

We are also open to working with other councils.

## Te Tāhuhu Kōrero Background

Due to concerns about water management in New Zealand and the high cost to communities, the previous Government started the three waters reforms, initially proposing four large organisations across the country which would work independently but still have input from councils. That later changed to a proposed model of 10 entities.

The current coalition government has since repealed these reforms. It introduced Local Water Done Well legislation covering service delivery systems, economic regulation and consumer protection for water services and changes to the water quality regulatory framework.

Under Local Water Done Well councils decide on the delivery model, choosing from the options that are available or developing their own.

### **UNDER THIS LEGISLATION COUNCILS MUST:**

- Meet new financial and regulatory requirements, ensuring water services are ring-fenced (for example the financial administration of water services must be kept separate from the rest of council);
- Invest in infrastructure to address long-standing issues and set fair prices that reflect the cost of delivering water services;
- Develop a fit-for-purpose Water Services Delivery Plan by early September 2025 outlining how they will meet these requirements. These plans must cover 10 years.

In September 2024, Rotorua elected members directed council officers to start creating a water services delivery plan based on an in-house model while also continuing to explore other potential arrangements. They have since decided on a preferred delivery model to take out to community consultation, which is outlined in this document.

## Ngā tūtakitanga ki ngā iwi tae noa mai ki ēnei rā Engagement with iwi so far

Iwi and hapū connection to wai is deeply rooted in their cultural values and traditions and is repeatedly described as a source of life, identity and wellbeing. Water services are highly impactful to iwi, hapū and whānau because of their role and responsibilities as tangata whenua and their connection with the environment.

Rotorua Lakes Council has legislative responsibilities to existing relationship obligations that require us to ensure iwi and hapū can participate in Council decisions. Council is dedicated to ensuring that iwi and hapū play an integral role in shaping the future of water services and has been keeping iwi partners informed of the work with workshops underway.

Information has also been shared with iwi entities that couldn't attend the workshops and council staff are making themselves available to engage further at their request, to inform and gather their feedback. This will be an ongoing kōrero as we continue to develop the future delivery of water services.

## Te wahanga ki ngā kaunihera What councils have to do

As well as deciding on how water services will be delivered (the service delivery model), as part of Local Water Done Well councils must develop Water Services Delivery Plans that have to demonstrate their commitment to delivering water services, meet regulatory requirements, support growth and urban development and are financially sustainable.

Through these plans, councils will provide an assessment of their current water infrastructure, how much they need to invest in the future and how they plan to finance and deliver it through their preferred service delivery model.

The plans are a one-off, transitional requirement under the Local Government (Water Services Preliminary Arrangements) Act 2024 and must be submitted for approval by early September 2025.



## **Mō a mātau ratonga wai me te tūāhanga** **About our water services and infrastructure**

Rotorua Lakes Council owns and manages water services infrastructure assets valued at about \$1.19 billion (replacement value), comprising about 216,000 individual assets. These provide essential water supply, wastewater and stormwater services to Rotorua residents and businesses.



**410KM  
OF GRAVITY  
PIPELINES**



**164KM  
RISING  
MAINS**



Services three urban areas of Rotorua (Ngongotahā, city and eastern suburbs) and some rural lakeside communities

**2 WASTEWATER  
TREATMENT  
PLANTS**



**81 WASTEWATER  
PUMP  
STATIONS**



Over the next **10 YEARS** we plan to invest **\$427 million**

in water infrastructure to renew and upgrade our assets to meet current demand and future growth expectations

Day to day  
water costs  
are about

**26%**

of Council's  
operating costs



Water assets  
make up about

**34%**

of Council assets



## Te arotahi atu ki te āpōpō Looking to the future

Infrastructure is a priority for Council and the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan includes major investment in water supplies, stormwater and wastewater, totalling \$427.5m:

- water supplies \$90.9m
- stormwater \$169.2m
- wastewater \$167.4m

It includes investment for maintenance, operations, renewal and network upgrades.

This includes \$84m from the Government's Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF) for flood management and stormwater infrastructure that will enable housing.

Rotorua Lakes Council has a 30-year (2024-2054) Infrastructure Strategy that aims to ensure our infrastructure services are provided to an appropriate standard.

It identifies the significant capital decisions that need to be made over the next 30 years to deliver safe, reliable and stable infrastructure that keeps pace with demand and the changing face of our district. The strategy is a component of Council's Long-term Plan.

An assessment of our current assets indicates that most major assets are about a quarter to halfway through their design life expectancy. Renewals are being carefully managed, informed by risk and consequence criteria.

Some of our most widespread assets, such as gravity wastewater mains and stormwater mains, are identified as being in poor or at-risk condition based on age and predictive modelling standards. These are being carefully monitored to ensure appropriate funding.

The Infrastructure Strategy outlines the known condition of our assets and the integrated phases of work needed to maintain our core infrastructure in a stable condition to ensure a reliable service. It also outlines how the Council will address seven key strategic issues that need to be at the forefront of our infrastructure planning and decision-making:

- Maintaining Assets: Keeping our assets in a stable, reliable, and safe condition.
- Meeting Future Demands: Ensuring our infrastructure can handle future demands.
- Legislative and Policy Changes: Managing the impacts of changes in laws and policies.
- Cultural Values: Embedding cultural values in the way we manage our infrastructure.
- Climate Change and Sustainability: Addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.
- Resilience: Ensuring the resilience of our critical infrastructure.
- Institutional Knowledge: Maintaining institutional knowledge and capability (people resilience).

The strategy also details the expected total operating and capital investment required over the next 30 years. Here's what we expect:

- Planned expenditure on renewals across all infrastructure activities will generally remain constant. Interventions will be focussed on the most critical and/or high risk assets.
- Significant capital expenditure will be needed to enable growth in the first four years, particularly for stormwater projects, with external Government funding.
- The Rotorua Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade and discharge solution in the first two years will take up a large portion of the capital expenditure programme.



**Our Infrastructure Strategy is included in our Long-term Plan 2024-2034 and can be viewed on the Plans, Policies & Bylaws section of our website**

## Ngā tauira kawekawenga e tirohia ana Potential delivery models

There are three potential service delivery models that have guided the two options we are consulting the Rotorua community about.

To be able to model potential costs we have had to make a range of assumptions. These include things like inflation and interest rates.

Financial levels of service impacts: Given the magnitude and complexity of the scenarios the content provided in this document is indicative. It may change as we work through further implications, finalised legislation, compliance requirements, investment priorities and affordability for the community.



## POTENTIAL DELIVERY MODEL 1: IN-HOUSE COUNCIL WATERS DIVISION

### OWNERSHIP

Wholly council owned, operating as the waters division of Council.

### GOVERNANCE

Council has direct operational and governance (decision-making) oversight.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Council will work with mana whenua. Existing formal agreements between council and iwi would be honoured.

### STRATEGY

Council will need to prepare a water services strategy that meets all legal requirements and consult with its communities before adoption and implementation.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- Water Division will report to Council as per existing processes.
- Water service delivery will be subject to the usual local democratic processes and performance accountability expectations established through Long-term Plans.
- An annual water services report will include financial statements on water supply, wastewater and stormwater. These will continue to evolve and be adjusted as required to enhance and/or improve currently known requirements.

### BORROWING

Borrowing levels affect the whole of Council debt capacity. This borrowing and repayment of it will be ring-fenced to water services.

## THE FINANCIALS

Council will set the price and invoice customers. Pricing will be subject to regulation from the Commerce Commission.

| Projected Average Annual Water Charges per Residential Household |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 2023/24                                                          | \$1,917 |
| 2028/29                                                          | \$3,035 |
| 2033/34                                                          | \$3,270 |
| 2038/39                                                          | \$3,455 |
| 2043/44                                                          | \$3,513 |
| 2048/49                                                          | \$3,576 |
| 2053/54                                                          | \$3,644 |

## DEBT CAPACITY: 280% OF TOTAL COUNCIL REVENUE

Under this option, debt continues to be measured at a total council level and is limited to 250% of council revenue under Council's Financial Strategy which is a council set limit. LGFA borrowing rules allow council to borrow up to a maximum of 280% of its revenue.

Council's debt is forecast to be 219% of its revenue at 30 June 2025. As a result, it is limited in its ability to borrow to fund any investment outside of projects already funded in its Long-term Plan.

## POTENTIAL DELIVERY MODEL 2: COUNCIL-OWNED WATER SERVICES CCO (WSCCO)

### OWNERSHIP

Wholly council-owned separate water organisation.

### GOVERNANCE

Appointed Board comprised of independent, professional directors accountable to elected members.

### RELATIONSHIPS

The WSCCO will be required to work with mana whenua. Existing formal agreements with iwi would be honoured.

### STRATEGY

Council issues a statement of expectations to the WSCCO. The Board will prepare a water services strategy and consult only with Council before adoption and implementation.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- The WSCCO Board directly manages operations, is accountable to the council shareholder and will report regularly on performance (shareholder councils are accountable to the community).
- The water organisation will be required to work to an agreed statement of expectations and to meet relevant statutory requirements.
- Council retains the ability to dismiss or replace the Board of Directors for unsatisfactory performance.
- The water organisation will produce an annual report, including financial statements and information on performance against the agreed statement of expectations and any other matters outlined in the adopted water services strategy.

### BORROWING

Borrowing via Council or from Local Government Funding Agency directly but supported by a council guarantee or uncalled capital.

Higher borrowing levels and the impacts of financing costs will be reflected in the water services charges/rates.

## THE FINANCIALS

The WSCCO will set the price and invoice customers directly. Pricing will be subject to regulation from the Commerce Commission.

| Projected Average Annual Water Charges per Residential Household |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 2028/29                                                          | \$3,090 |
| 2033/34                                                          | \$3,274 |
| 2038/39                                                          | \$3,348 |
| 2043/44                                                          | \$3,402 |
| 2048/49                                                          | \$3,461 |
| 2053/54                                                          | \$3,525 |

### WSCCO DEBT CAPACITY: APPROXIMATELY 500% OF WSCCO REVENUE

A wholly owned WSCCO will have a reasonable amount of borrowing capacity to fund future investment without the need to increase revenue significantly. Three waters debt headroom would increase by \$4.4million in 2028/29 or \$5.9million in 2033/34.

### RLC DEBT CAPACITY: 250% OF REVENUE

Council's borrowing capacity after waters are removed would also increase and debt headroom would increase by \$108.6million in 2028/29 or \$75.8million in 2033/34.

## POTENTIAL DELIVERY MODEL 3: MULTI-COUNCIL OWNED WATER SERVICES CCO (WSSCO)

### OWNERSHIP

Ownership is shared across member councils. Councils will retain ownership via shares in the WSSCO. Only councils will own shares. Privatisation is not possible.

### GOVERNANCE

Appointed Board will be comprised of independent, professional directors accountable to the elected members of the owner councils. A professional board based on skills will oversee the WSSCO rather than elected members. Elected members provide direction to the Board annually via a Statement of Intent

### RELATIONSHIPS

The WSSCO will be required to work with mana whenua. Existing formal agreements between councils and iwi would be honoured by the WSSCO.

### STRATEGY

Shareholding Councils agree the process for issuing a combined statement of expectations to the WSSCO.

The Board will prepare a water services strategy and consult with shareholding Councils before adoption and implementation.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- The WSSCO Board directly manages operations, is accountable to council shareholders and will report regularly on performance (shareholder councils are accountable to their communities).
- The WSSCO will be required to work to a statement of expectations agreed by all shareholder councils and meet relevant statutory requirements.
- Shareholder councils retain the ability to dismiss or replace the Board of Directors for unsatisfactory performance, subject to collective agreement to take such action.
- The WSSCO would provide an annual report, including financial statements and information on performance against the agreed statement of expectations, and any other matters outlined in the adopted water services strategy.

## BORROWING:

Borrowing arrangements and credit rating implications dependant on whether shareholder councils provide direct or guarantee financial support.

Higher borrowing levels and the impacts of financing costs will be reflected in the water services charges/rates.

## THE FINANCIALS

There is no requirement for price harmonisation (ie everyone across the districts covered by the WSCCO paying the same amount).

The WSCCO will set the price and invoice customers directly. Pricing will be subject to regulation from the Commerce Commission.

The average charge per residential household would vary depending on which Councils partnered together. The following is based on four Bay of Plenty Councils<sup>1</sup>.

| Projected Average Annual Water Charges per Residential Household |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 2028/29                                                          | \$2,981 |
| 2033/34                                                          | \$3,228 |
| 2038/39                                                          | \$3,382 |
| 2043/44                                                          | \$3,435 |
| 2048/49                                                          | \$3,492 |
| 2053/54                                                          | \$3,555 |

## WSCCO DEBT CAPACITY: APPROXIMATELY 500% OF WSCCO REVENUE

A multi-Council owned WSCCO will have a reasonable amount of borrowing capacity to fund future investment without the need to increase revenue significantly. Three waters debt headroom would increase by \$4.7million in 2028/29 or \$3.12million in 2033/34.

## RLC DEBT CAPACITY: 250% OF REVENUE

Council's borrowing capacity after waters are removed would also increase and debt headroom would increase by \$108.6million in 2028/29 or \$75.8million in 2033/34

<sup>1</sup> Rotorua Lakes Council, Whakatāne District Council, Kawerau District Council, Ōpōtiki District Council

# Ngā Kōwhiringa Uiuinga Consultation

We are consulting the Rotorua community about the following options, which are guided by the potential delivery models.

## 1

### Option 1 (our preferred option):

**Water services delivered in-house until 2028, then delivered by a WSCCO (either wholly owned by Rotorua Lakes Council or a multi-council WSCCO) from July 2028 onwards.**

Water services would be delivered by an in-house Council water services division until July 2028. During the 2025-2028 triennium, Council would undertake a detailed study of a multi-council water organisation. In late 2026/early 2027 Council would decide whether it wants to join the multi-council WSCCO or, if not, to transfer water assets and operations to a Rotorua Lakes Council WSCCO. This would enable a higher borrowing limit for water services and free balance sheet capacity for other council services.

## 2

### Option 2:

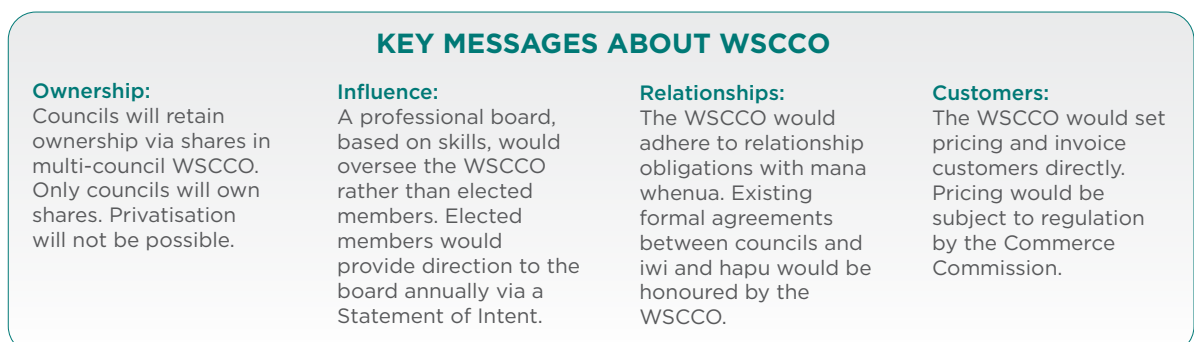
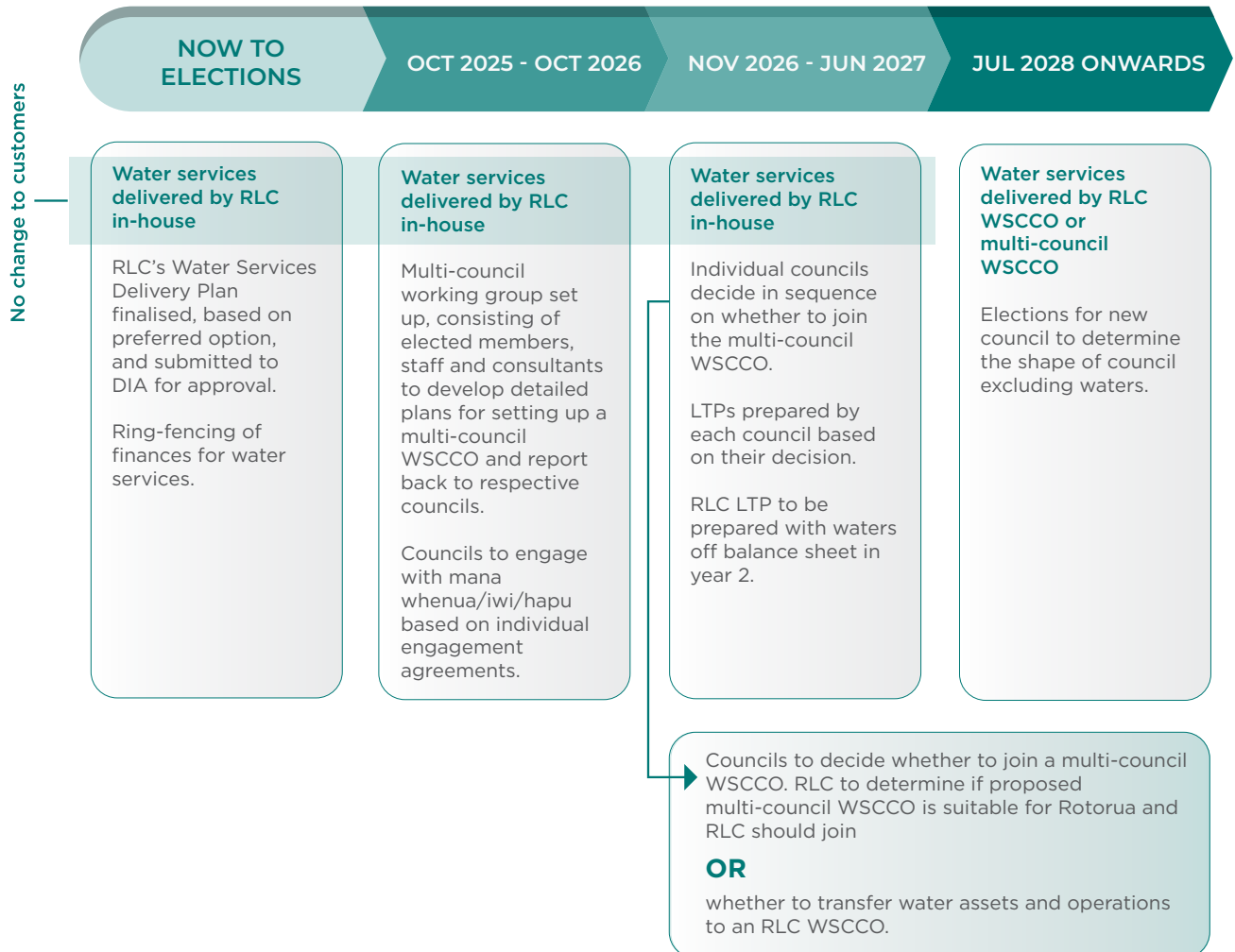
#### **In-house Council Water Services Division.**

Water services would continue to be delivered by Council in-house.

|               | Preferred Option                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Alternative Option                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advantages    | <p>This option enables RLC to conduct a detailed assessment of a multi-council WSCCO.</p> <p>It allows certainty for water services customers for the next 3 years as evaluation of a WSCCO is undertaken.</p> <p>It allows the time for engagement with mana whenua and the community on which water services delivery system is best for Rotorua over the long term.</p> <p>It allows RLC to learn from other councils that set up WSCCOs on a more advanced timeframe.</p> <p>This option aligns with central government expectations that councils pursue multi-council WSCCOs.</p> | <p>This option provides certainty for the longer term assuming government approval.</p> <p>Council retains direct oversight and operational control of water services delivery effectiveness and efficiency</p> <p>Provides for a better link to other council strategic objectives alignment such as growth planning, local agreements and relationships development.</p>                                                                                                                                                     |
| Disadvantages | <p>Further investigations will be required before a decision can be made on the suitable WSCCO model.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages of WSCCO post 2027:</b></p> <p>Council will have less direct control over a WSCCO than an internal council division.</p> <p>There could be a level of disconnection from other council planning.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>This option does not align with central government expectations that councils pursue multi-Council WSCCOs and may impact on the relationship that this council wants to have with the government on a range of other issues.</p> <p>An internal council water services division is constrained by the scale that a multi-council owned waters organisation may be able to provide.</p> <p>Council's ability to use debt leverage for long term investment will be constrained by Council's prudential borrowing limits.</p> |

# Te mahere ki te whiriwhiri i tō mātau kōwhiringa matua

## Roadmap to our preferred option



<sup>1</sup> Rotorua Lakes Council, Whakatāne District Council, Kawerau District Council, Ōpōtiki District Council



## **Mō ētehi atu kōrero** **More information**

### **Te whakanama ki te whakamahi i te wai | Charging for water**

In the Rotorua district commercial and rural properties are currently metered but urban residential properties are not and Rotorua Lakes Council's current policy is to not meter domestic users in the urban areas.

Whether meters may be introduced in future across Rotorua's urban areas is dependant on future decisions.

Under the Local Water Done Well legislation New Zealand's independent economic regulator, the Commerce Commission, will monitor the pricing of water under any delivery model adopted.

Water meters may be introduced in some areas of New Zealand that currently don't have these. Meters are a way to accurately measure water use, help detect leaks, increase awareness of water consumption and encourage water conservation and charge only for actual water used per consumer.

### **Te mana whakahaere ki ngā rawa wai i raro i te kaupapa nei | Ownership of water assets under Local Water Done Well**

Under the new legislation there are safeguards and requirements to ensure water assets can't be sold or transferred to private entities.

### **Te aroturuki me te whakarite i ngā ratonga wai | Monitoring and regulation of water services**

Under Local Water Done Well changes are being introduced to better monitor services, quality and cost.

The Department of Internal Affairs is overseeing the implementation of the new legislation and providing support to councils.

The Commerce Commission will have a role around pricing through economic regulation.

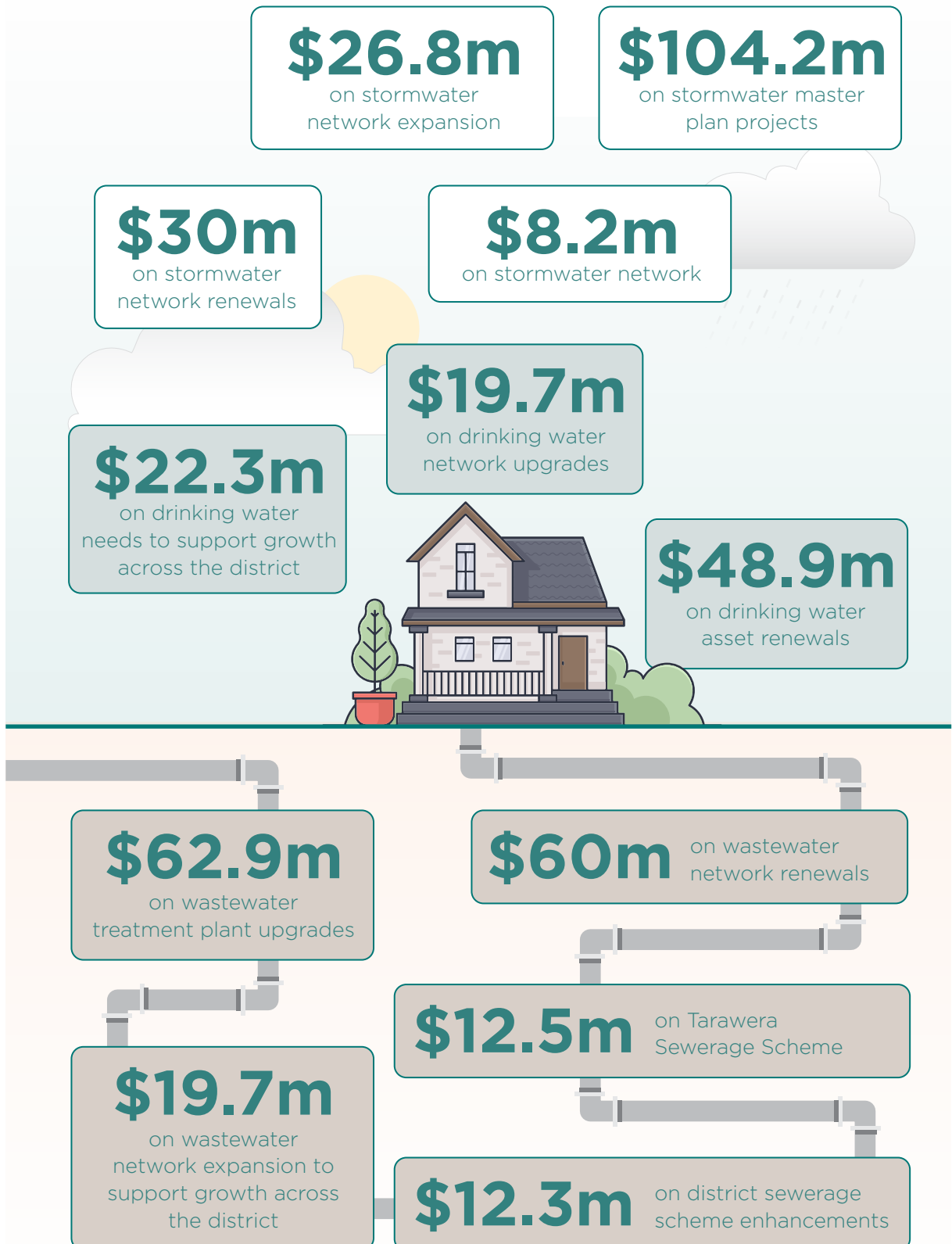
Taumata Arowai – the Water Services Authority ensures drinking water meets national standards and will also implement new wastewater discharge standards that will come into effect around August 2025.

Councils or their water entities will have to pay additional costs now for these regulators.

This coming year that includes \$300,000 to Taumata Arowai and \$100,000 for the Commerce Commission.

A range of other proposed legislation changes would also influence water services, such as the Resource Management Act (RMA) and new standards for wastewater treatment which are expected to reduce costs.

Ngā pātanga wai mātuatua kua whakamaheretia  
i roto i ngā tekau tau e tū mai ne  
Major water projects planned for 2024-2034



## Tō mātau rārangi wā Our timeline



## Me pēhea te whakapuaki whakaaro How to have your say

Do you support the preferred option of Council continuing to provide water services in-house until 2028 with a decision in 2027 about whether to have water services delivered by a multi-council owned WSCCO or a Rotorua Lakes Council WSCCO? Why/why not?

There are various ways you can provide feedback for the Council to consider in its decision making:

- Go online to: [rlc.net.nz/water](https://rlc.net.nz/water)
- Send your submission or feedback to Rotorua Lakes Council, Rotorua Lakes Council, DX Mailbox number (JX 10503), Rotorua 3046, New Zealand
- Drop off a submission or feedback to our Customer Centre at 1061 Haupapa Street
- Email us at [participate@rotorualc.nz](mailto:participate@rotorualc.nz) with the subject line 'Local Water Done Well'
- Leave a comment on Facebook posts related to Local Water Done Well on [@rotorualakescouncil](https://www.facebook.com/rotorualakescouncil)
- Phone us on 07 348 4199 (8am - 5pm, Monday to Friday)
- Talk to us at one of our community events – keep an eye out on RLC channels for event information.



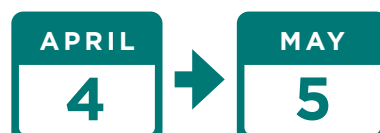
You are welcome to also share your views in any way that suits you.

Please add your name and contact details and email it to us or submit it online.

### He aho ō whakaaro? What do you think?



Consultation runs from 4 April to 5 May







**ROTORUA  
LAKES COUNCIL**  
Te Kaunihera o ngā Roto o Rotorua

Civic Centre  
1061 Haupapa Street  
DX Box JX10503  
Rotorua 3046  
New Zealand

 +64 7 348 4199

 [info@rotorualc.nz](mailto:info@rotorualc.nz)

 [rotorualakescouncil.nz](http://rotorualakescouncil.nz)



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