



PSA

# Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina

## Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina submission on the Water Services Entities Bill

July 2022

### About Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina

Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina, the Māori arm of the PSA membership, is an integral part of New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA), the largest trade union in New Zealand with 81,000 members working across the country in public and community services.

Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina represents and promotes over 10, 000 Māori members of the PSA and is committed to honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi across the public sector and inside the union. Our structures ensure a Māori perspective is heard in all levels of our organisation.

### This submission

This submission is a partner to the PSA submission, and it endorses the submission of the PSA Local Government Sector Committee. The submission was also guided by the PSA's strategic goals, values, and Ngā kaupapa o Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina.<sup>1</sup>

### Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina response to the Bill

#### *Kāwanatanga of three waters*

Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina Kōmiti supports mana whenua having equal representation in the governance structures of Water Services Entities. It is a means of ensuring Māori can be equal and active partners in the governance of water in their rohe/takiwā and provides greater ability for mana whenua to exercise rangatiratanga over their taonga.

We welcome that representative interests will be determined by Māori for Māori through a Kaupapa Maori process. As kāwanatanga occurs at a decision-making level, we would like the kupu (word) kāwanatanga added to the Bill alongside 'governance' to better reflect the partnership between councils and mana whenua, therefore further highlighting Māori input into the highest levels of decision-making process from a Maori perspective.

<sup>1</sup> PSA's strategic goals, values, and Ngā kaupapa o Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina can be found on the [PSA website](https://www.psa.org.nz)

This approach to governance represents a step forward in providing for meaningful partnership between Māori and the Crown under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The reforms are an opportunity to design a system that works better for iwi and hapū and enables them to have a stronger voice in matters affecting the wellbeing of their taonga – both wai and tāngata. As Waitangi means ‘weeping waters’ we welcome that the proposed water services entities will be required to have significant cultural and local expertise ensuring local opportunities for Maori to participate in the new delivery arrangements.

In recent years Aotearoa has seen the establishment of local co-governance arrangements in varying forms, through Treaty settlement legislation (eg, for the Waikato and Waipa Rivers) and through voluntary local initiatives (eg, for Te Waihora), as well as other models for better enabling partnership between councils and mana whenua. These types of approaches are already a feature of modern local governance in Aotearoa, and they are not something that non-Māori need to fear.

### *Te Mana o te Wai*

We also welcome the inclusion of Te Mana o te Wai as a fundamental part of the legislation. This is a positive step in ensuring that three waters are managed in a way that protects the health of our environment, both in terms of how drinking water is sourced, and how wastewater and stormwater impact on the health of receiving environments.

We support the requirement in the Bill to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, and to provide a mechanism for mana whenua to articulate what that means for the particular awa, roto and puna in their rohe or takiwā through issuing Te Mana o te Wai statements.

We are excited that the reform will provide opportunities for local expression of Te Mana o Te Wai that will enable development of Mauri frameworks and application of mātauranga Māori.

### *Safeguards against privatisation*

We welcome the Government’s bottom line of public ownership of three waters infrastructure, and the measures that have been put into the legislation to safeguard against future privatisation. We strongly believe that the involvement of iwi/Maori with councils, in the strategic oversight and direction of the entities will enhance these protections.

### *Conclusion*

The Three Waters Reform represents an opportunity to address long-term affordability challenges, equity of access to services, and meet quality expectations of our communities in the delivery of drinking water, stormwater and wastewater services. This should be a basic human right.

Involvement provides an instrument for mana whenua to prioritise their capacity and capability to participate in the new system, and recognises the role of whānau and hapū in providing kaitiakitanga oversight on something that is so important in conjunction with Te Tiriti o Waitangi rights of water as a taonga.

Ngā mihi

Te Rūnanga o Ngā Toa Āwhina Kōmiti