



# Summary

## *Crown investment in freshwater clean-up*

The quality of freshwater in New Zealand is important to our well-being, national identity, and contributes to our clean and green reputation.

Human intervention and the effects of climate change have degraded freshwater quality in some areas. To restore, improve, and preserve freshwater quality for future generations, the Crown contributes significant funding to national freshwater clean-up projects.

We examined how the Ministry for the Environment administered four Crown freshwater clean-up funds for improving lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands. Our primary objective was to assess whether Crown funding was being used effectively to improve freshwater quality. Collectively, the four funds provided more than \$190 million of investment from 2008 to 2032.

Although each fund was able to demonstrate some progress towards their intended outcomes, the Ministry cannot yet demonstrate the overall effectiveness of its freshwater clean-up funds. Therefore, it is difficult to tell whether the money invested has been targeted as effectively as it could have been.

In our view, it is likely that the overall Crown investment would have been more effective if a more co-ordinated approach had been taken. The Ministry's ability to effectively manage freshwater investment has been further limited because there is no national freshwater clean-up framework to guide clean-up efforts.

However, the Ministry has progressively improved its administration of freshwater clean-up funds through applying knowledge and experience from managing earlier funds. We saw a range of innovative practices, such as harvesting lake weeds and projects aimed at supporting iwi relationships with their awa and other waterways.

We are encouraged by a report from the Ministry and the Ministry for Primary Industries, *Essential Freshwater: Healthy Water, Fairly Allocated*, published in October 2018. The report discusses implementing a framework for freshwater policy to give the Government clearly defined goals to work towards. We endorse the recommendation to implement a national framework or strategy.

