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Tēnā koe Leeanne McAviney

Thank you for your letter of 11 March 2022 about the Office of the Auditor-General's performance audit of monitoring how water is used for irrigation.

The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) has taken steps to implement your recommendations as part of the Essential Freshwater work programme. Specifically, this is through implementing the 2020 amendments to the Resource Management (Measurement and Reporting of Water Takes) Regulations 2010 (the amended regulations).

The amended regulations mandate the automatic collection of water measurement data for all water takes greater than or equal to 5 litres per second. The new requirements come into force in stages between 2022 and 2026, based on the amount of water used.

The amended regulations also specify minimum data standards including the measurement of volume taken (in cubic metres) in each 15-minute period, or at other times only if a permit holder has approval from the relevant regional council.

In 2020, the Ministry established a new business group, Policy Implementation and Delivery (PID), to support the roll-out of new policies and regulations, with an initial focus on the Essential Freshwater work programme.

To support the water metering changes in particular, PID has so far:

- created brochures and information sheets to inform councils and landowners of their obligations under the amended regulations, including the benefits of adopting telemetered water metering and technical information for installing telemeters; and
- funded updates to Irrigation New Zealand's Water Measurement Code of Practice, which contains technical standards for ensuring that meters are correctly installed, validated and accurate.

More generally, the Essential Freshwater work programme is being implemented in partnership with Iwi/Māori representatives and the regional sector. We have also established a senior level cross-sector advisory group and sector-specific groups to allow for closer collaboration with the primary sector, and to understand the concerns and aspirations of environmental NGOs.



Taken together, I consider that the amended regulations, coupled with a new implementation and delivery business group focussed on working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders, will address your recommendations relating to (i) manual collection of data and (ii) working collaboratively to improve the management of freshwater resources.

However, it is too early to determine the extent to which the amended regulations will have changed the way that people and organisations holding water permits use the water that they have been allocated. The Ministry will consider how best to implement this final recommendation as part of our oversight role relating to the Essential Freshwater package as a whole.

Thank you once again for writing. The Ministry looks forward to providing you with further information as the amended regulations come into force and the benefits from the Essential Freshwater work programme begin to be realised.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vicky Robertson', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Vicky Robertson
Secretary for the Environment