



# Summary

## *Managing the supply of and demand for drinking water*

Public assets, such as the infrastructure that provides us with drinking water, are important to the quality of life of all New Zealanders.

We audited three district councils (Horowhenua District Council, Kāpiti Coast District Council, and Manawatu District Council) and one city council (Palmerston North City Council) to understand the challenges they face in supplying drinking water to their communities. We looked at what these four councils are doing to influence demand for drinking water and whether they are taking an integrated approach, using financial and non-financial methods.

Supplying drinking water can be complex, requiring expensive underground assets as well as expensive above-ground assets, such as treatment plants and reservoirs. Although important, drinking water is only one of many priority areas that councils are responsible for. It is important that communities also have confidence that councils are working to ensure that the supply of drinking water is reliable and sustainable.

We found, for all four councils, that some things had been done well and that other aspects could

be improved. All four councils recognise that issues such as climate change, increased demand, increased limits on access to water, increased regulation, or higher consumer expectations are likely to affect them. However, there is uncertainty about the pace of change.

We understand that every council has its own priorities. In our view, councils that have a broad range of objectives for providing drinking water and a greater balance between supply and demand management tools are in a better position to respond to future challenges. This is because they have taken a more comprehensive approach to providing drinking water that puts emphasis on leak reduction and water conservation, even when access to water is not restricted.



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