Watercare

Wastewater pulse report 2025/26

Progress, challenges and priorities.

A reliable wastewater network is essential to a healthy Auckland

Ki te ora te wai, ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata.

When the water is healthy, the land and the people are healthy.

Every day, Auckland's wastewater network carries more than 400 million litres of wastewater from our homes and businesses to treatment plants, helping protect public health and our environment.

Our waterways are central to the health and wellbeing of Tāmaki Makaurau, holding profound cultural and environmental significance for mana whenua. Guided by Te Mana o te Wai, we recognise the importance of protecting te hauora me te mauri o te wai / the health and life force of water and the role of mana whenua as partners and kaitiaki in shaping how we care for our waterways.

While most of us don't think about what happens to water after we flush the toilet or wash the dishes, Watercare sees first-hand the challenges involved in keeping this essential service running.

When wastewater pipes become blocked or overwhelmed, the effects can reach our beaches, waterways, homes, community centres and businesses.

As Auckland grows, we're working to improve a network that's under increasing pressure from ageing infrastructure, a changing climate and avoidable blockages.

In this report, you'll see how our wastewater network performed over the past year, where problems persist, what we're doing to improve the network, and how Aucklanders can help reduce overflows, and protect our environment. Every day, Auckland's wastewater network carries more than 400 million litres of wastewater from our homes and businesses to treatment plants, helping protect public health, our waterways and the environment for current and future generations.

Mark Bourne
Chief Operations Officer

Three of our focus areas

Build + upgrade

Invest in infrastructure so the network can operate reliably as Auckland grows.

Keep stormwater out

Find and reduce stormwater and groundwater entering wastewater pipes.

Prevent blockages

Help Aucklanders understand what should — and should not — go into the wastewater system.

What is the Network Discharge Consent?

Since 2014, Watercare has been working under the Network Discharge Consent, a 35-year programme to improve Auckland's wastewater network, reduce wastewater overflows and protect public health and Auckland's waterways. This report provides an update on network performance, key challenges and progress during 2025/26. The full report can be found **here**.

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How Auckland's wastewater network performed

Overall wastewater overflows reduced two per cent in the past year, down from 5670 the year before to 5558. While the overall number has reduced, the causes and locations of overflows give us useful insights into how we can reduce them even more.

Since the southern section of the Central Interceptor tunnel was commissioned in early 2025, an estimated 741,000 cubic meters of wastewater and stormwater overflows have been prevented from entering the environment (to July 2026), demonstrating the benefits of targeted investment.

2% improvement

	2024/25	2025/26
Total overflows	5,670	5,558
Dry-weather overflows	2,834	2,598
Wet-weather overflows	2,836	2,960
Major overflow events	1	3
Controlled overflows	1,084	1,180
Uncontrolled overflows	4,586	4,378

Overflows in Auckland 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026 compared to the prior year.

What's an overflow?

Nationally recognised, a wastewater overflow is the release of wastewater from the network into the environment.

- **Controlled overflow location:** a physical location, also called an Engineered Overflow Point (EOP), where a discharge occurs from a structure specifically designed and constructed to allow for wet weather overflows.
- **Uncontrolled overflow locations:** any point in the wastewater network not specifically designed or intended to discharge wastewater.
- **Dry-weather overflow:** when less than 1mm of rain has fallen in the previous 24 hours.
- **Wet-weather overflow:** when 1mm or more of rain has fallen in the previous 24 hours.
- **Major overflow events:** Serious overflows that result in significant environmental, public health, or property impacts.

Why wastewater overflows happen

Various conditions can cause wastewater networks to overflow. The response we take to an overflow depends on what conditions have caused it.

Blockages were associated with 4146 of the 5558 (75 per cent) wastewater overflows recorded last year, making them a major contributor and a challenge to manage the network performance.

Rainfall and whether the network system is combined or separated also matters: when stormwater and groundwater get into the wastewater network, it can increase wastewater volume and contribute to overflows during wet weather.

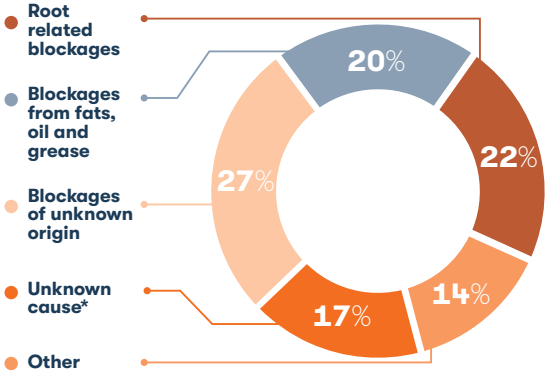
Although only around two per cent of the wastewater network remains combined with stormwater, it accounted for 37 per cent of controlled overflows last year.

Performance is improving in some areas, but overflows remain a significant issue in parts of Auckland.

Dry weather

Overflows in dry conditions are commonly linked to blockages, damaged pipes or equipment issues.

Causes of overflows during dry weather recorded this year:



* *A large share of dry weather events were recorded with an unknown cause, often because the blockage had already been cleared before the cause could be confirmed. Events categorised as other is made up of causes like broken pipes, silt, equipment or power failures, or third-party damage. Blockages of unknown origin have been cleared by us, but contents not captured for identification.*

Wet weather

During heavy rain, stormwater and groundwater can enter wastewater pipes and add to the volume the network has to carry. As combined networks are designed to carry both stormwater and wastewater, a small amount of rain can have a huge impact.

Wet-weather overflows can be influenced by:

- **stormwater or groundwater entering the wastewater network**
- **blockages such as roots, fats and rags**
- **damaged or broken pipes**
- **local capacity constraints**

This year, uncontrolled wet weather overflows increased, as it was a wetter year, reinforcing the need to keep finding and reducing inflow sources and to improve network resilience.

Major overflow events last year

Three wastewater overflows were classified as major during 2025/26. These included one dry weather overflow caused by a power and monitoring system failure at the Warkworth Street pump station, and two overflows on Māori Hut Road caused by damaged wastewater pipes.

In each case, wastewater entered nearby waterways or estuaries. Immediate response actions were taken to stop the overflows, repair the faults, minimise environmental impacts and carry out environmental monitoring.

The photo at right shows wastewater overflowing from a manhole.

See page eight for wastewater infrastructure projects underway.

Case study: Smart sewer sensors prevent wastewater overflows every day

Almost 5000 sensors have been rolled out in the past year as part of Watercare's $12 million Smart Sewer Programme and are now preventing more than one overflow per day on average by detecting pipe blockages that can be cleared before they cause overflows.

Read more at **watercare.co.nz/smart-sensors**

A shared job — with different responsibilities

Watercare

- Inspect, maintain, renew and upgrade the public network.
- Improve capacity.
- Find inflow and infiltration.
- Monitor performance and environmental effects.

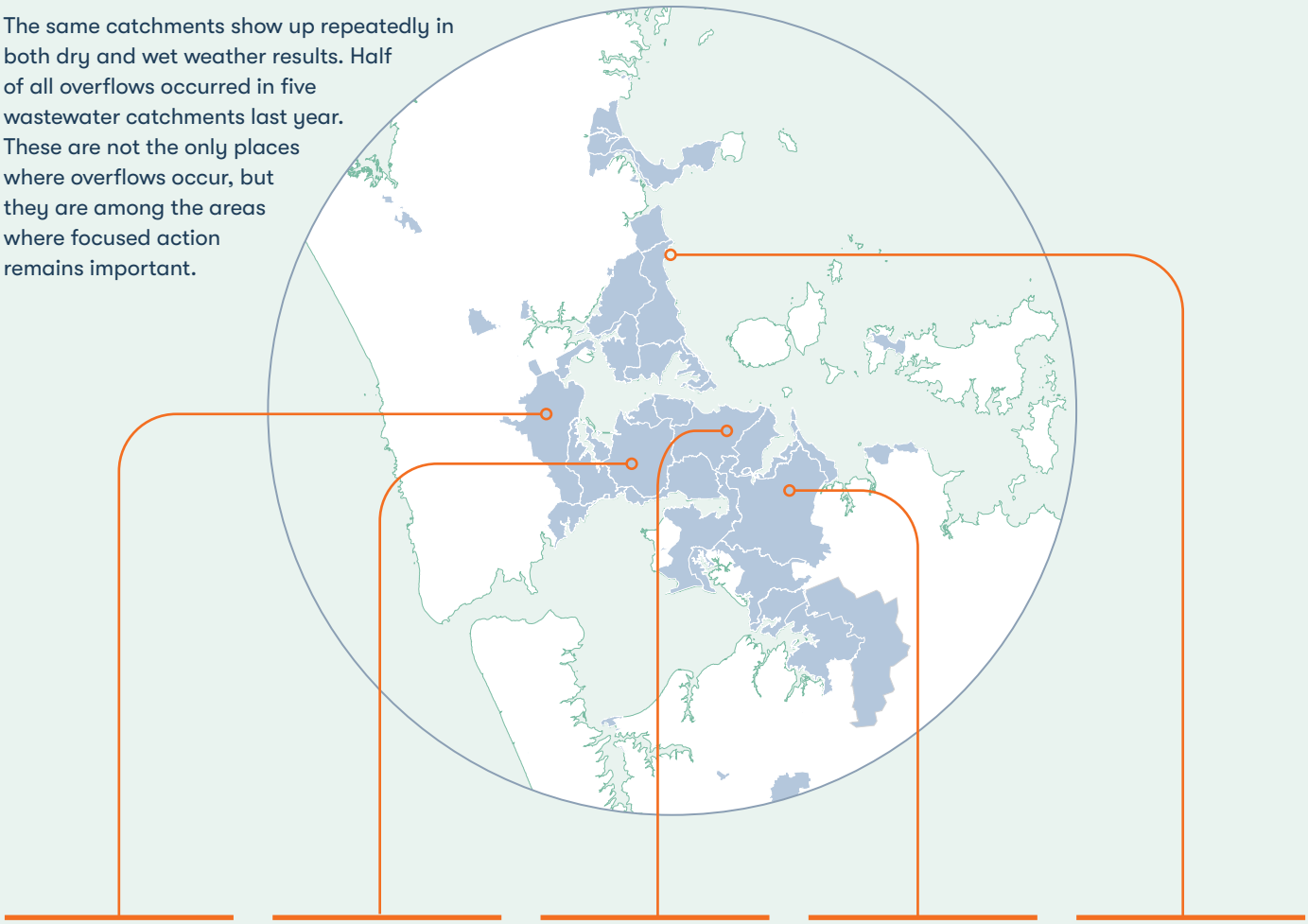
Aucklanders

- Keep wet wipes, rubbish, fats, oils and grease out of wastewater pipes.
- Make sure stormwater and wastewater plumbing are correctly connected. Unsure? Talk to a plumber.
- Report wastewater issues to us quickly.

Some parts of Auckland experience more overflows than others

The annual Network Discharge Consent report looks at 36 wastewater catchments. Recurring patterns help us target investigation, maintenance and investment.

The same catchments show up repeatedly in both dry and wet weather results. Half of all overflows occurred in five wastewater catchments last year. These are not the only places where overflows occur, but they are among the areas where focused action remains important.



Henderson Creek

Recurring overflow pressure; Northern Interceptor and related catchment works are key responses.

Western Isthmus

Recurring across dry- and wet-weather measures; major improvement programmes are underway.

Hobson Bay

High dry-weather alarm activity and recurring wet-weather overflow pressure. Renewals are underway.

Upper Tāmaki River

One of the recurring priority catchments, with staged capacity upgrades in delivery.

East Coast Bays

High wet-weather activity; targeted sewer and transmission upgrades are being delivered.

Catchment	Total overflows	2025/26 vs 2024/25	Wet weather overflows	Dry weather overflows	Controlled overflows	Uncontrolled overflows
Hobson Bay*	698	↓ 69	65%	35%	57%	43%
Upper Tāmaki River	675	↑ 110	45%	55%	5%	95%
Western Isthmus*	544	↓ 125	60%	40%	30%	70%
Henderson Creek	480	↓ 59	60%	40%	22%	78%
East Coast Bays	412	↓ 7	52%	48%	9%	91%
Top five combined	**2,809**	**↓ 150**	**56%**	**44%**	**26%**	**74%**

*Catchments containing combined wastewater networks.

Using insights to direct investment

By identifying areas where wastewater problems happen repeatedly, we can focus our efforts and investment where they're needed most; helping to prevent future overflows, improve the reliability of the wastewater network and reduce impacts on the environment.

The influence of older combined networks

Most of Auckland has separate wastewater and stormwater systems, but around two per cent of the wastewater network consists of older combined systems that carry both. These systems are particularly vulnerable during rainfall, when stormwater can quickly increase flows and contribute to overflows.

Last year, around 80 per cent of recorded overflows associated with combined network locations occurred during wet weather. Most were concentrated in Hobson Bay, Cox's Bay and the Western Isthmus, showing how a relatively small part of Auckland's wastewater network can contribute disproportionately to overflow frequency.

However, combined networks are only part of the picture. Other high-overflow catchments, including Upper Tāmaki River, Henderson Creek and East Coast Bays, have predominantly separated networks. Contributing factors include blockages, damaged pipes and stormwater entering wastewater pipes.

What this means for opportunities to improve the network

Understanding where overflows happen most often, whether they occur during wet or dry weather, and whether they are controlled or uncontrolled helps us focus investigations, maintenance and infrastructure upgrades where they can make the greatest difference.

- **Combined network areas:** the focus is on increasing capacity and reducing overflow frequency through network upgrades.
- **Separated network areas:** investigating recurring blockages, pipe condition, reducing inflow and infiltration are the focus.

Integrating our data with Safeswim

Safeswim helps people make informed decisions about when and where to swim by providing access to real-time information on water quality, swimming conditions and potential hazards at popular swimming locations.

Safeswim integrates monitoring data from our sensors located at key points across the wastewater network, displaying a black pin on the Safeswim website in real time when a sensor detects an overflow in progress.

Approximately 50 critical Engineered Overflow Points (EOPs) near beaches are currently integrated with Safeswim, providing timely information to the public about wastewater overflows.

Last year, overflows from these monitored locations accounted for around seven per cent of all recorded wastewater overflows. More than half of these events were concentrated at just four engineered overflow points associated with Cox's Bay*, Hobson Bay* and Henderson Creek. While these events represent a relatively small proportion of network-wide overflows, their proximity to recreational waters makes them particularly important for public health monitoring and risk management through the Safeswim programme (**safeswim.org.nz/**).

See page eight for significant wastewater projects delivered in 2025/26 and programmes underway.

* Cox's Bay and Hobson Bays are older combined stormwater and wastewater networks, which are susceptible to overflows during wet weather.

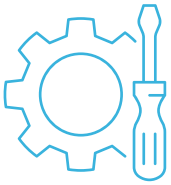
Delivering smarter, together

We're taking a three-part approach to reduce wastewater overflows, improve the reliability of our network and prepare for Auckland's growth. By finding problems earlier, fixing existing issues and investing in new infrastructure, we're working to better protect our communities and waterways.

FIND

How we're identifying problems earlier.

- CCTV inspections, smoke testing and flow monitoring
- Target expansion of smart sensors at manholes and overflow points
- Data and analytics to help identify problem areas and prioritise response



FIX

How we're solving existing problems.

- Targeted renewals and repairs
- Work to reduce stormwater and groundwater entering wastewater pipes
- Major sewer relining programme and targeted defect repairs.

BUILD

How we're preparing for the future.

- As part of our ten year plan we have nine infrastructure programmes of more than 1000 projects underway.

FIND & FIX: Responsiveness to and resolution of faults and issues

This year we responded quicker than our target call-out and issue resolution time. The team's quick response helped restore services promptly and keep the wastewater network operating smoothly.

Faults on the wastewater network	Median time taken by crews to attend to the overflows caused by blockages or other faults	**61 minutes** against a target of ≤90 mins	
	Median time taken by crews to resolve the overflows caused by blockages or other faults	**2.6 hours** against a target of ≤5 hours	

The aim is simple: fewer overflows, better resilience and enough capacity to support Auckland's growth.

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Investing in a more resilient wastewater network

2025/26 saw significant investment in wastewater infrastructure across Auckland.

This included major projects that are already delivering benefits to communities, such as completing the **Central Interceptor** wastewater tunnel from Point Erin to the Māngere Wastewater Treatment Plant.

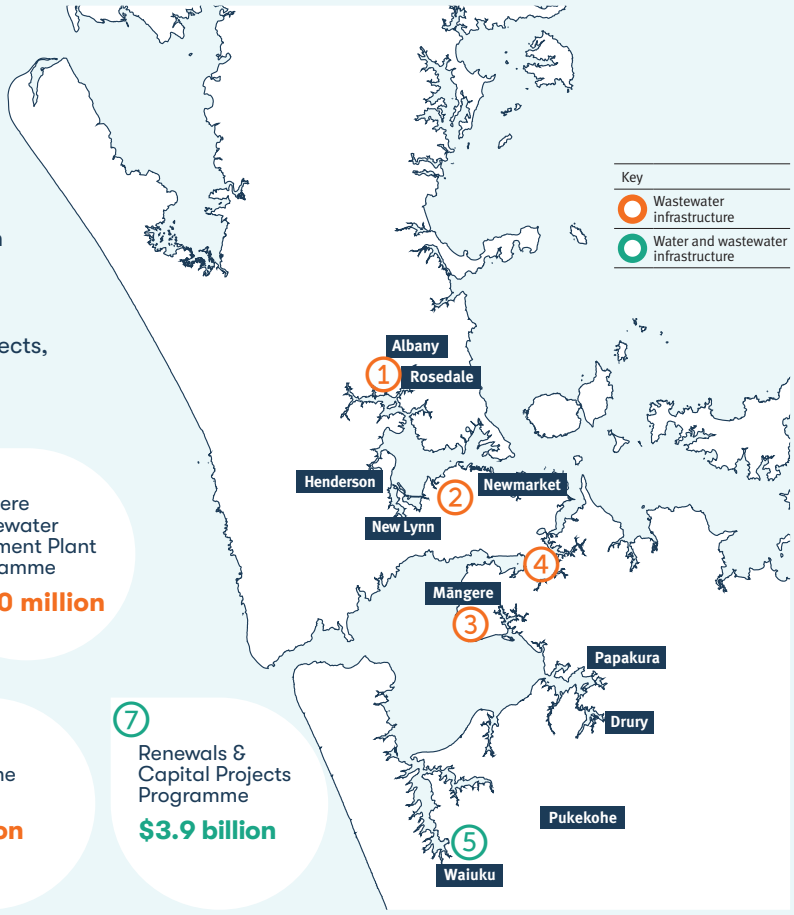
Other significant wastewater upgrades last year to support resilience and growth across Auckland included:

- **Snells Beach** – Commissioning a new wastewater treatment plant.
- **Clarks Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant** – Completing a new outfall and technology upgrades.
- **Eastern Interceptor** – Connecting a new wastewater main as part of the $64 million Archboyd wastewater upgrades in south Auckland.
- **Rosedale** – Completing a large concrete pour for the new confluence chamber at the Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant. When the Northern Interceptor is commissioned, the chamber will redirect wastewater from Hobsonville to Rosedale, rebalancing the network and freeing up capacity at Māngere.
- **Beachlands and Maraetai** — Completing critical wastewater renewals to enable a more reliable wastewater network by relining 6.2 kilometres of local pipes.
- **Western and Eastern Isthmus improvement programmes** — multi-stage work to relieve local constraints and reduce overflows.
- **Northern Interceptor** — progressed commissioning and integration to the Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- **Upper Tāmaki** — commencement of staged capacity upgrades in Ōtara.
- **East Coast Bays and Ōrākei / Hobson Bay** — targeted relief and renewal programmes.

Strategic programmes underway

To increase capacity, improve network performance, and prepare for Auckland's continued growth, over the next ten years (July 2026 to June 2036), we're delivering nine infrastructure programmes across Auckland; seven of which are focussed on strengthening the wastewater network. This investment is supported by $2.6 billion in operational and support funding across our water and wastewater networks and shared services.

To discover more about our ongoing infrastructure projects, visit **watercare.co.nz/projects**



1. Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant Programme — **$700 million**
2. Waitematā Water Quality Improvement Programme — **$1.9 billion**
3. Māngere Wastewater Treatment Plant Programme — **$700 million**
4. Wastewater Interceptor Programme — **$900 million**
5. Southwest Programme — **$400 million**
6. Biosolids Programme — **$1 billion**
7. Renewals & Capital Projects Programme — **$3.9 billion**

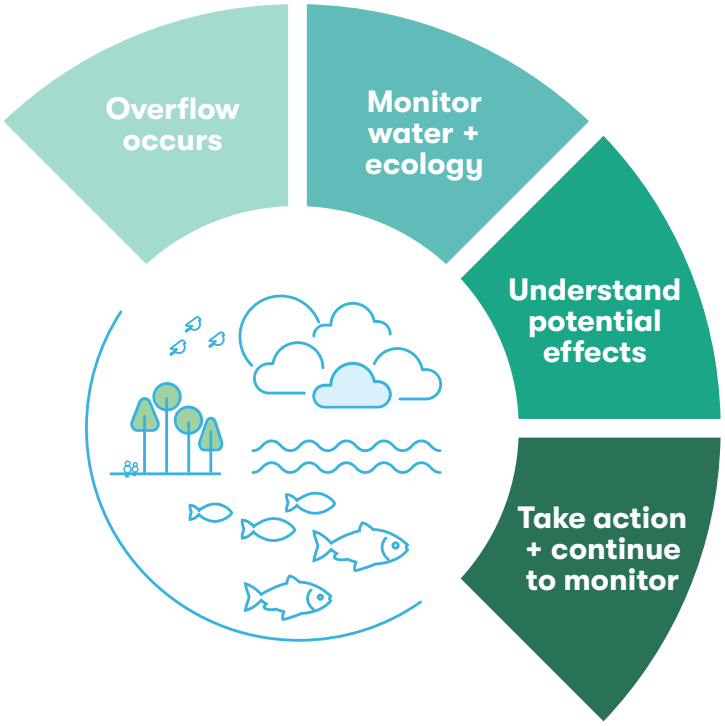
Protecting our waterways takes monitoring, investment, partnership, and everyday action

We need to understand environmental effects as well as network events.

Watercare completed the first full pilot of its modern targeted monitoring programme across freshwater and coastal environments. The programme helps us check whether our assessments of overflow impacts match what is happening in the real world.

By combining seasonal monitoring, continuous water-quality sensors and ecological indicators, we can compare monitoring results with predicted environmental and public health risks. This helps us identify where wastewater overflows may be affecting receiving environments, improve our understanding of those effects, and refine how we assess them in future.

Working alongside mana whenua, we recognise the value of bringing together mātauranga / Māori knowledge and scientific monitoring to build a more holistic understanding of the impacts of wastewater overflows on our waterways. This includes recognising cultural values, te mauri o te wai / the life force of water and the wider health of receiving environments, helping inform how we assess environmental effects and identify opportunities for improvement.



What Aucklanders can do

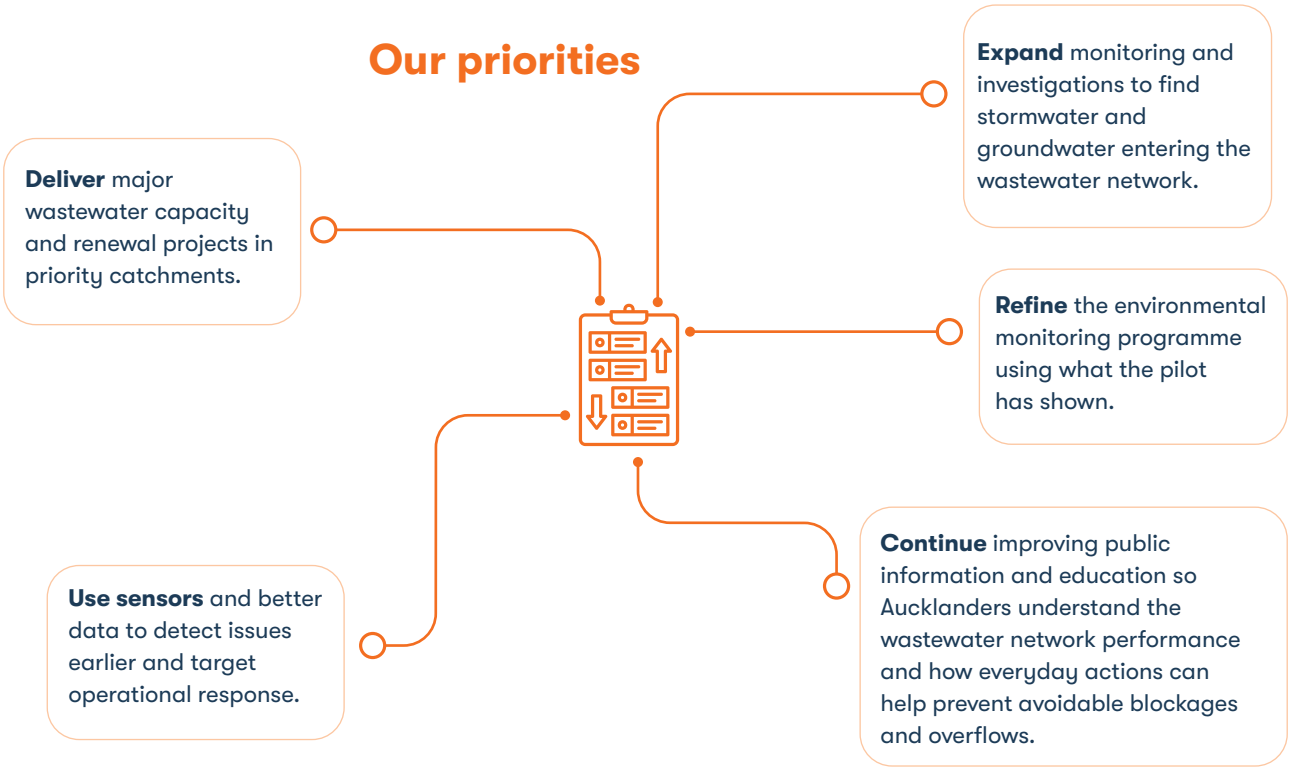
- **Flush only** pee, poo and toilet paper.
- **Don't flush** wet wipes, dental floss, tampons or other rubbish.
- **Bin cooled fats, oils and grease.** Don't put them down the drain.
- Make sure **stormwater and wastewater** plumbing on private property is correctly connected.
- **Report** wastewater overflows or network issues so they can be investigated and responded to.
- **Use Safeswim** for current information about swimming conditions at Auckland beaches and waterways.
- **Learn more** about Auckland's water and wastewater system through Watercare's resources, Wonder Wai Discovery Centre and education programmes. **watercare.co.nz/learn**

Building water literacy

The Wastewater Network Strategy 2023 engagement summary found that many Aucklanders have limited understanding of wastewater and stormwater systems. A key objective of the Network Discharge Consent is to improve water literacy through accessible information, and show how communities can help improve outcomes.

The next phase: targeted improvement

We will keep focusing on the places, causes and projects that can make the greatest difference.



Find out more

This pulse report is a customer summary. The full Auckland Network Discharge Consent Annual Performance Report contains detailed catchment data, overflow records, trend analysis, project information and monitoring methodology. If you have questions or feedback, please get in touch.

For a glossary of terms used in this report visit **watercare.co.nz/glossary**

Full report

Detailed annual performance

watercare.co.nz/wastewater

Wastewater

Learn how to prevent blockages

watercare.co.nz/keepitflowing

Safeswim

Current swimming conditions

safeswim.org.nz

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