

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL  
OF AUCKLAND COUNCIL**

**I MUA NGĀ KAIKŌMIHANA MOTUHAKA  
I TE TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU ROHE**

**UNDER** the Resource Management Act 1991 ("**RMA**")

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of an application to Auckland Council by Watercare Services Limited ("**Watercare**") for a resource consent to construct, commission, operate and maintain a wastewater tunnel and associated activities in Herne Bay, Auckland ("**Project**")

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN JOHN WEBSTER ON BEHALF OF  
WATERCARE SERVICES LIMITED**

**(CORPORATE)**

**2 FEBRUARY 2024**

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## 1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 My name is Stephen John Webster. I am the Chief Infrastructure Officer at Watercare. In my evidence I provide an overview of Watercare's role and operations as Auckland's statutory water and wastewater provider. I also outline at a high level the Project and how it fits into Watercare's broader programme of works.
- 1.2 Watercare is statutorily responsible for providing essential water and wastewater services to existing and future communities in Auckland. This includes the wastewater infrastructure which services the community of the Herne Bay catchment.
- 1.3 To fulfil its statutory obligations, Watercare must exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community that it serves. Watercare's Statement of Intent for 2022-2025 ("**SOI**") commits Watercare to improving network performance by building and maintaining infrastructure and protecting the environment, among other objectives.
- 1.4 This Project is an integral component of the Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme ("**WIWQIP**"), which is a joint initiative between Watercare and Auckland Council's Healthy Waters that was established in 2017. WIWQIP is aimed at reducing wastewater overflows and improving stream and beach water quality across the city's central Western Isthmus. WIWQIP has been identified in Watercare's Asset Management Plan 2021-2041 ("**AMP**") as a key programme to further protect the environment and provide clean harbours and waterways.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.5 The main objective of the programme of works is to significantly reduce wastewater overflows into the Waitematā Harbour and reduce stormwater entering the wastewater network. It involves numerous major infrastructure improvements to the stormwater and wastewater networks in collaboration with Healthy Waters. At a high level, the three main goals of WIWQIP include:
- (a) to reduce risks to public health by alleviating uncontrolled discharges into local catchments;

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<sup>1</sup> Asset Management Plan 2021-2041 at page 17.

- (b) to remove the permanent health warning status of both Meola Reef and Cox's Beach; and
  - (c) to reduce intermittent beach closures in the area over the next 10 years.
- 1.6 This programme of works represents an approximate investment from Watercare of \$800 million over the next 10 years, which is a very significant investment in infrastructure across the city's central Western Isthmus.
- 1.7 Overall, the Project is critical to reducing wastewater overflows and improving water quality in the Herne Bay catchment. The Project itself, as a key component of the wider WIWQIP, will assist Watercare in bringing about considerable environmental benefits, reduce risks to public health and improve the amenity of the Herne Bay catchment.
- 1.8 I am proud of the consent application that has been put together by the Watercare team and its external expert advisers. This includes the extensive efforts that have been made to consult with our stakeholders, including the submitters, to address the concerns they may have about this Project. Our team works incredibly hard to deliver the essential community wastewater infrastructure that all Aucklanders and our natural environment needs now and in the future. In my view, the Project is thoroughly deserving of consent on the basis the Watercare team has now proposed.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **Qualifications and experience**

- 2.1 My full name is Stephen John Webster. I am the Chief Infrastructure Officer at Watercare.
- 2.2 I have a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Civil Engineering and a Diploma of Corporate Management and Business Administration.
- 2.3 I have been employed by Watercare for seven and a half years, firstly in the role of General Manager – Infrastructure Delivery, and since December 2017 as Chief Infrastructure Officer. In this role, I lead a team that develops and delivers Watercare's \$8.9 billion capital works programme, and which provides support to the community enabling them to progress Auckland's growth. The key aspects of my role involve overall responsibility to Watercare's Chief Executive and its Board regarding:

- (a) The development and delivery of servicing strategies and the 20-year AMP.
- (b) The production of business cases for capital investment.
- (c) The design and construction delivery of all infrastructure projects.
- (d) The progressing of water and wastewater consents for all of Auckland's developments.
- (e) The relationship with Auckland's major developers to ensure we are supporting them and planning for growth.
- (f) Interface management between the investments of other infrastructure providers and Watercare's assets.

2.4 In my role as Chief Infrastructure Officer, I am ultimately responsible for the delivery of the Project, which involves the construction and operation of a trunk sewer line from Point Erin Park to the intersection of Marine Parade and Bella Vista Road in Herne Bay. As I stated earlier in my evidence, I am proud of the consent application that has been put together by the Watercare team and its external expert advisers. Our team works incredibly hard to deliver the essential community wastewater infrastructure that all Aucklanders, and our natural environment, need now and in the future.

### **3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

3.1 In the remainder of my evidence, I will:

- (a) Give an overview of Watercare's role and operations as Auckland's statutory water and wastewater provider.
- (b) Outline the WIWQIP and its essential role in enabling the ongoing growth and development in the Auckland region.
- (c) Outline the rationale and background to the Project, including the proposed use of Salisbury Reserve.
- (d) Briefly discuss Watercare's ongoing consultation with its community stakeholders, including submitters.

#### 4. WATERCARE'S OPERATIONS

- 4.1 Watercare is New Zealand's largest provider of essential water and wastewater services and is responsible for providing these services to existing and future communities in Auckland. Everyday Watercare provides wastewater services and supplies approximately 427 million litres per day of water to about 1.7 million people connected to the metropolitan water supply system and wastewater network.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.2 Watercare's wastewater network collects, treats and disposes of wastewater at 18 Wastewater Treatment Plants ("WWTPs"). Watercare's wastewater network includes 594 pump stations, 158 storage tanks and more than 8,000km of wastewater pipes. In recent years, Watercare has undertaken a programme to substantially increase the collection and treatment capacity of its wastewater network. This has included upgrading a number of its WWTPs with treatment technology that will produce higher-quality treated wastewater, resulting in better environmental outcomes alongside upgrading the pipe network.

##### **Watercare's obligations**

- 4.3 Watercare is a wholly owned subsidiary of Auckland Council and is a Council-Controlled Organisation. Watercare's core obligations are set out in section 57(1) of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009. This requires, amongst other things, that Watercare:<sup>3</sup>

manage its operations efficiently with a view to keeping the overall costs of water supply and wastewater services to its customers (collectively) at the minimum levels consistent with the effective conduct of its undertakings and the maintenance of the long term integrity of its assets.

- 4.4 Section 57(1)(d) also requires Watercare to have regard for public safety in relation to its infrastructure.
- 4.5 The Local Government Act 2002 ("LGA") requires Watercare to:<sup>4</sup>
- (a) produce and comply with a statement of intent in consultation with its shareholder (Auckland Council);

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<sup>2</sup> This figure is the average million litres per day produced at Watercare's water treatment plants in the 2021/2022 financial year.

<sup>3</sup> Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, s57(1)(a).

<sup>4</sup> Local Government Act 2002, s59.

- (b) exhibit a sense of social and environmental responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which it operates; and
- (c) conduct its affairs in accordance with sound business practices.

4.6 Watercare's SOI for 2022-2025 sets out Watercare's obligations and commitments, how it intends to meet those commitments, and the measures by which its shareholder, Auckland Council, can assess the company's success. Watercare's vision, as set out in the SOI, is to:

- (a) be trusted by our customers and communities for exceptional services;
- (b) deliver safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater services 24/7;
- (c) enhance our partnerships and strong relationships with Māori in Tāmaki Makaurau;
- (d) protect and enhance our natural environment, including by mitigating the impact of our water and wastewater activities on the environment;
- (e) mitigate climate change and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- (f) build a safe, engaged and empowered team;
- (g) assist to future-proof infrastructure needs required for growth and providing supply assurance;
- (h) construct high performing infrastructure (that is reliable and resilient now and in the future);
- (i) work in partnership with Auckland Council on Auckland's growth and intensification;
- (j) become "Future Fit" with industry leading thinking and processes; and
- (k) manage our operations efficiently, keeping costs to customers (collectively) at minimum levels while maintaining the long-term integrity of our assets.

4.7 These obligations require Watercare to proactively manage its water and wastewater infrastructure and plan for the delivery of its services over the long-

term with an increasing population. They also require that Watercare consider its investment priorities which are described in Watercare's AMP. Watercare prepares an AMP to show how the business will operate, maintain, and renew existing water and wastewater assets to meet demand as growth occurs.

4.8 Watercare has devoted considerable thought to the necessary investment and resourcing to service the Herne Bay catchment, including:

- (a) providing for future development;
- (b) using the best possible technology;
- (c) minimising environmental impacts; and
- (d) managing projects efficiently.

## **5. WESTERN ISTHMUS WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

5.1 Watercare has a statutory obligation under s58 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 to give effect to Auckland Council plans, including as they relate to anticipated population growth and the associated demand for wastewater and other infrastructure services. Under our SOI, as I have described above, we also strive to continually improve and mitigate our environmental impact and enhance and strengthen our relationships with mana whenua. These factors have been relevant in driving our development of the WIWQIP and this Project (which is an essential component of the WIWQIP programme), as I now describe below.

5.2 Parts of the Auckland Isthmus, including Herne Bay and St Mary's Bay, are serviced by the older components of Watercare's wastewater network. Much of this network was constructed in the earlier part of the twentieth century to support a developing Auckland. The network servicing this area was constructed largely as a combined sewer system, where wastewater and stormwater drain into the same pipe network.

5.3 During dry weather conditions, the pipe system conveys wastewater. However, during rainfall, stormwater enters the system and when the pipe is at capacity, the combined wastewater and stormwater flow discharges to the environment (to land) at specifically designed engineered overflow locations, thereby avoiding uncontrolled discharges elsewhere in the network. While improvements have been made to this combined network over many years, stormwater inflows remain significant and will continue to increase with

increasing growth and development and climate-change related impacts. With the ongoing growth and development of the Auckland Isthmus, this situation will continue to worsen if no improvements are made.

- 5.4 WIWQIP was developed as a joint initiative (established in 2017) between Watercare and Auckland Council (specifically Healthy Waters) to reduce wastewater overflows and improve stream and beach water quality across the city's central Western Isthmus. More particularly, it aims to significantly reduce the frequency and volume of overflows in the Western Isthmus. Mr Deutschle will set out the detail of the WIWQIP programme and the recent revision of that programme which has led to the development of this Project. However, ultimately, the proposed Herne Bay Tunnel will ensure that combined flows are collected and conveyed directly to the Central Interceptor, where they can be treated at the Māngere WWTP, consistent with the WIWQIP's overarching aim to significantly reduce overflows moving forward.

## **6. THE HERNE BAY TUNNEL PROJECT**

- 6.1 The Project consists of the construction and operation of a trunk sewer line from Point Erin Park to the intersection of Marine Parade and Bella Vista Road. It is also proposed to use part of Salisbury Reserve and a site off Shelly Beach Road (94a-94b Shelly Beach Road) as construction support areas ("**CSAs**") for the Project. The new trunk sewer line will connect to the extended Central Interceptor in Point Erin Park, where its flows will be transported to the Māngere WWTP for treatment. The detail of the Project's core elements is provided in the evidence of Mr Deutschle and I do not repeat that detail here.

- 6.2 The Project, by connecting to the Central Interceptor tunnel in Point Erin Park utilises the very significant investment by Watercare in the Central Interceptor project. As previously mentioned, resource consent for the extension to the Central Interceptor to Point Erin Park was granted in September 2023. Without this Project, the Point Erin extension provides limited benefit to the Herne Bay catchment.

### **Proposed use of Salisbury Reserve as the primary CSA**

- 6.3 Through development of this Project, Watercare has been cognisant of limiting the disruption to the Herne Bay community. As part of this, Watercare has sought resource consent to construct the pipeline within the road corridor in Herne Bay to avoid the need for construction activities within, and beneath private property. Further, to reduce the construction footprints within the road



corridor (and therefore number and duration of required partial and full road closures during construction as well as impacts to residents' access to their properties), and the need to otherwise compulsorily acquire private property (which we always seek to avoid), Watercare has sought resource consent to use Salisbury Reserve and a site off Shelly Beach Road as CSAs.

- 6.4 I am aware that use of Salisbury Reserve as the primary construction support area is opposed by some submitters. However, I confirm that Watercare has looked very closely at what options were available for use as a primary CSA, and I am confident as Watercare's Chief Infrastructure Officer that, based on that work, Salisbury Reserve is the only feasible option as the primary CSA. The reasons Salisbury Reserve is the only feasible option for the primary CSA and is therefore critical to the delivery of the overall Project are addressed in detail by Mr Deutsche and in the evidence of Mr Bishop, and I do not repeat that evidence here.

#### **Benefits of the Project**

- 6.5 In my view, the Project will enable Watercare to meet its statutory obligations under the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 and its vision set out in the SOI. This is because the Project will:
- (a) increase the capacity and resilience of the wastewater network;
  - (b) improve coastal water quality by reducing the frequency of overflow events into the Waitematā Harbour;
  - (c) use the latest technology to deliver an efficient alignment in a cost-effective manner, in a way that minimises environmental impacts as much as practicable;
  - (d) reduce disruption as far as practicable to the wider community, as the Project is utilising the road corridor rather than completing works on people's private properties; and
  - (e) future proof the infrastructure needs of the growing population in Auckland by enabling critical wastewater services to be provided to meet increased demand.
- 6.6 This Project will provide the same benefits as sewer/stormwater separation in terms of overflow reduction and water quality improvements within the Herne Bay catchment. This approach also provides wider network benefits which separation by itself would not provide and increases overall resilience of the

wastewater network. Overall, I consider the Project will generate very significant positive effects, by improving the existing combined wastewater network, enabling a significant reduction in combined network overflows and providing capacity for future population growth in the Herne Bay area.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 Watercare undertook an extensive consultation process in relation to the Project which has included engaging with key stakeholders and potentially affected landowners. This is described in detail in the joint evidence of Mr Jeremy Elley-Brown and Mr William Hung on behalf of Watercare, and I do not repeat that detail here.

7.2 What I will say is that I am proud of the consultation our team has undertaken on this Project, which I consider has been appropriate in the circumstances. In particular, we have expended considerable time and expense in seeking to address the various issues that have been raised by submitters, including making many of our experts available to submitters for questions and discussions to address, as best we can, the concerns they have raised with us.

7.3 In particular:

- (a) Watercare has met with the group of residents who lodged a late submission concerning use of Salisbury Reserve, and facilitated a meeting with these residents and the Watercare Board as well. Watercare has heard the concerns of the various submitters and the community regarding use of Salisbury Reserve and as will be set out by Mr Bishop, has revised the extent of land required within the Reserve to reduce the potential for amenity effects insofar as possible.
- (b) In direct response to the submitters who own apartments in the masonry building on the corner of Sarsfield and Wallace Streets and their concerns regarding the potential for this building to be damaged by our works, Watercare engaged an independent structural engineer to further assess the potential for structural damage to result the property. As a result of that, I understand the concerns raised by those landowners have now been addressed.
- (c) Watercare has been in direct engagement with the Ministry of Education and Ponsonby Primary School to ensure that any

potential impacts on students' safety as a result of our works are appropriately addressed. I am pleased that robust consent conditions to manage the potential effects on students' safety have been developed and agreed between the parties, and I understand any concerns relating to student safety are now resolved.

- 7.4 Moving forward, Watercare is committed to maintaining ongoing and meaningful relationships with all its stakeholders in the Project, through the current application process, its subsequent construction and beyond.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The Project is a critical component of the WIWQIP programme. The Project is essential to ensuring that sufficient wastewater infrastructure is provided to service future growth and development in the Herne Bay catchment. It will also reduce the volume and frequency of wastewater overflows from the engineered overflow points, which will lead to improvements in water quality at the beaches in the Herne Bay catchment, along with a reduction of odour from stormwater catchpits and improved overall amenity.
- 8.2 I am proud of the work the Watercare team has done in developing the Project and preparing the required consent conditions. The Project has been designed to appropriately manage all potential environmental effects. On behalf of Watercare, I therefore ask that the Commissioners grant the required resource consents for the Project, subject to the extensive conditions that have been proposed by Ms Drury.

**Stephen John Webster**  
**2 February 2024**