

Hon Simeon Brown

Minister for Energy
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Transport
Minister for Auckland
Deputy Leader of the House



19 January 2024

Tory Whanau
Mayor
Wellington City Council

By email: mayor@wcc.govt.nz

Dear Tory

I wrote to the chair of the Wellington Water Committee on 20 December 2023 asking what action shareholder councils are taking in the short- to medium-term to address potential water shortages, and future plans to protect water supplies. My letter was in response to concerns raised by Taumata Arowai that modelling by Wellington Water and the Greater Wellington Regional Council showed that demand will exceed supply in January and February this year.

I understand the chair of Wellington Water asked your council to provide the required information to him by 17 January 2024. I am disappointed that you have not met this deadline or provided any update to my office.

Water shortages in our capital city will have significant impacts on communities and businesses. I expect councils to take their obligations to residents and ratepayers seriously and implement all mitigations necessary to avoid cuts or limits on water supplies.

As Minister of Local Government, I have a range of options under Part 10 of the Local Government Act in relation to local authorities. Under section 257 I can require a local authority to provide information to me about the problem and its plans to address it.

Based on your failure to respond to the chair of the Wellington Water Committee, modelling prepared by Wellington Water, and ongoing public concerns that a state of drinking water emergency may be declared this summer period, I believe a problem may exist with your Council's ability to meet its obligations regarding supply of drinking water and you are unwilling or unable to address it.

It is on this basis that I am making a formal request for more information, under section 257 of the Local Government Act 2002.

I require the following information to understand how you are addressing or planning to address the problem:

- a summary of all actions taken by your council in the last ten years to prevent water shortages, including investment in water network infrastructure and asset management;
- a summary of all funding provided by your council in the last ten years for condition assessments of water network infrastructure;
- detail of all depreciation accrued against your water network infrastructure versus the level of capital investment to be outlined in the first three years of your 2024-34 Long Term Plan;

- a summary of all advice received by your council from Wellington Water in relation to necessary investment levels and actions taken by your council in response to this;
- evidence your council intends to make necessary investments in the first three years of the 2024-34 Long Term Plan in water loss management activities, and increasing capacity and storage;
- evidence your council is committed to supporting the recommendations made at the Wellington Water Summit in September 2023;
- any other documentation that would give me assurance your Council is taking action to address the risk of water shortages this summer and into the future.

Please submit the information requested to my office in writing by 1 February 2024.

Under section 257(4) of the Local Government Act 2002, you must respond to this notice by this date, unless I have agreed otherwise.

Should you have any questions about this process, or any questions regarding my decision, please contact my office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simeon Brown'.

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Local Government

Copy to: Barbara McKerrow
Chief Executive
Wellington City Council