

AUCKLAND STORMWATER CONSENT REVIEW, A SNAPSHOT OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

Gemma Chuah, Vanessa Castro (Auckland Council Healthy Waters), Ian Mayhew, Trent Sunich (4Sight Consulting - Part of SLR)

ABSTRACT

Auckland Council's Healthy Waters Department was granted an Auckland wide stormwater consent in 2019 to manage and discharge stormwater runoff from Auckland's existing urban and future urban area. The consent sought to give effect to the 'integrated stormwater management approach' of the Auckland Unitary Plan, while at the same time enabling and facilitating growth and development. The consent also sets a range objectives, outcomes and targets across a range of stormwater management issues.

An important element of the consent is periodic reviews to report on performance progress, identify key issues and necessary amendments to the consent. This assists in ensuring it remains current and relevant over its lifetime as the management of a complex network such as that in Auckland is not static, but must necessarily evolve over time as understanding and technology changes.

The first review was undertaken in 2022 and incorporated feedback from mana whenua, local boards, industry practitioners and the general public. An independent audit of the review was also completed by a Technical Reference Group.

The success of the consent in achieving its outcomes is measured by a range of metrics. The review comprehensively assessed the compliance with the various objectives and targets sought by the consent and made recommendations for various actions that will continue to improve the implementation of the consent.

With the consent being granted in 2019, it is too early to see tangible receiving environment outcomes; however the first review of the consent provided a useful check in to assess the implementation of the consent to date.

Key outcomes of the review are:

- Overall good progress is being made towards achieving the outcomes in the consent and compliance with the targets.

- Continued work is required to ensure mana whenua participation in the consent and incorporation of Te Mana o te Wai into outcomes and Healthy Waters' processes.
- In the context of growth, there are challenges for the implementation of water sensitive design and achieving good quality stormwater assets.
- Process improvements are needed to address stormwater industry concerns around consistency, clarity, efficient approval processes and a 'whole of council approach' to new and redevelopment.
- Avoiding development in floodplains in greenfield areas and reducing flood risk in existing brownfield continues to prove difficult. The stormwater consent is only one of the tools on managing flood hazard which is influenced by land use decisions.
- The framework for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the consent is continuing to be established and improved. This includes flood risk and water quality, and ecological indicators and trends.

Going forward, we inevitably work in an evolving environment and significant change is on the horizon that will impact on expectations for stormwater management and how it is approached. This includes matters such as; Three Waters Reform; resource management reform; and implementation of the NPS-FM. The NDC will need to continue to evolve to ensure that effective stormwater management will be implemented in Auckland.

KEYWORDS

Stormwater management planning, Integrated stormwater management, Asset management, resource consents.