



# TOI TE ORA PUBLIC HEALTH

*Bay of Plenty + Lakes Districts*



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Toi Te Ora Public Health  
PO Box 2120  
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Committee Secretariat  
Health Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

## **Submission to Taumata Arowai — the Water Services Regulator Bill**

### **Introduction**

District Health Boards (DHBs) are required by the Public Health and Disability Act 2000 to improve, promote, and protect the health of people and communities, to promote the inclusion and participation in society and independence of people with disabilities and to reduce health disparities by improving health outcomes for Māori and other population groups.

This submission has been prepared by Toi Te Ora Public Health (Toi Te Ora) which is the Public Health Unit for both Bay of Plenty District Health Board and Lakes District Health Board (the DHBs).

The key role of Toi Te Ora is to promote, protect and improve population health, prevent ill health and minimise the risk of disease and injury through population based interventions.

Public health approaches wellbeing and health in terms of the social, economic, cultural, environmental and political context and from a “determinants of health” perspective. Many of the factors that determine health are directly influenced by the decisions and activities of Government, which is why it is important New Zealand has fit for purpose legislation for a new regulatory body to oversee, administer, and enforce the drinking water regulatory system.

Designated officers within Toi Te Ora have responsibilities to reduce conditions within the local community which are likely to cause disease. One way in which this is done is by assisting the Ministry of Health to select and design final policy proposals to Parliament for law reform that safeguard public health.

For these reasons the DHBs welcome the opportunity to inform changes to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the laws that relate to the drinking water regulatory system.

**Declaration of interest**

This submission aims to provide objective and independent input to promote good health for current and future populations.

Drinking Water Assessors and Technical Advisors currently employed by Toi Te Ora could seek employment with Taumata Arowai.

**Submission**

The DHBs support the intent of this Bill to implement the Government's decision to create a new regulatory body to oversee, administer, and enforce the drinking water regulatory system. The Bill would establish Taumata Arowai – the Water Services Regulator (Taumata Arowai) as a new Crown agent and provide for its objectives, functions, and operating principles. It would also provide for its governance arrangements, including the establishment of a Board and Māori Advisory Group.

The following comments and recommendations on the Taumata Arowai – the Water Services Regulator Bill are made on behalf of the DHBs:

The DHBs support the Taumata Arowai objective to protect and promote drinking water safety and public health outcomes. The DHBs would strongly advocate for this objective to be carried into the functions of Taumata Arowai.

Public health has been defined as the 'science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society' (Acheson 1988). A public health approach is about promoting wellbeing and preventing ill health. To achieve optimal outcomes for our communities, it is essential that health remains the priority for the new regulator.

DHBs are responsible for population health within their districts and are also focused on reducing health inequities. Equity is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically (WHO, 2014). Equity means fairness including meaningful participation of, and benefits for, all groups.

The DHBs would also advocate for an additional function of Taumata Arowai. Whilst performing any of Taumata Arowai objectives and functions, that Taumata Arowai - the Water Services Regulator facilitates, promotes, or supports the equality of outcomes for communities. Achieving equal results generally entails reducing or eliminating inequalities or inequities.

Equity seeks to ensure that everyone receives safe drinking water, recognising existing differences in community. Treating everyone the same (equality) does not mean that safe water will be provided to all, since not all start from the same place and their needs and

interests are different. If the diverse needs, roles and contexts of all different users of a water supply system are considered through the drinking water regulatory system, opportunities to address inequities will be identified, and unintended negative impacts or inadvertent discrimination can be avoided.


Priority also needs to be given to achieving equity for our populations, and working in partnership with iwi as per Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.

The DHBs wish to thank the Ministry for the opportunity to submit.

The DHBs do not wish to be heard on this submission.



**Sir Michael Cullen**  
Chairperson  
Bay of Plenty District Health Board



**Nick Saville-Wood**  
Chief Executive  
Lakes District Health Board

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**References**

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World Health Organisation (2014): 'Equity' website: [www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en](http://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en) WSP (2010). Mainstreaming Gender in Water and Sanitation: Gender in Water and Sanitation, November 2010.