This submission relates to those parts of the consultation document that deal with potable water. Because it is the place I am most familiar with the issues, it concentrates on Wellington. I believe the principles contained in this submission will have application to other areas dealt with in the consultation document.

The analysis of the problems and the proposals relating to water in the consultation document are similar to the account of problems and suggested fixes for the issues facing the Wellington region with regard to water supply that have emanated from Wellington Water. I would characterize the principles underlying this analysis and the direction of suggested actions as neoliberalism with a smiley face. The application of competitive markets and market pricing underpins the direction in the infrastructure consultation document. From experience one can conclude that water provision on this basis will increase social inequality.

The narrative in Wellington about potable water is:

Leaking aging pipes comprise a substantial part of the network and need to be fixed. We need water meters at all residences to identify leaks. This will cost $144 million. By helping to identify leaks it will reduce the amount of water lost by leaks. This will help put back the time when to meet population growth a third (expensive) storage lake is needed. We can then concentrate resources on replacing old leaking pipes in the distribution network.

If we look at the facts this above narrative is simply spin designed to move Wellington to a market for the supply and purchase of potable water as the allegedly the cost efficient means of securing supply into the future.

Total consumption of water in Wellington has not increased from its peak in 1990. Then consumption was 160 million litres per day. In 2020 it was 155 million litres per day. From 1990 the population has increased by 28%. It is unproven that future population growth will increase the total volume of water needed by an amount requiring the construction of a third lake. There may be other less expensive means of ensuring supply with a larger population.

Water meters at every residence will only assist in identifying the leaks that occur between the toby and the residence. How substantial these leaks are is unknown. Total water consumption by leaks, both public and private, is estimated to be anywhere between 7% and 30% of the total water volume. Anyone who walks around the streets of Wellington during summer can readily identify the leaks on private property as well as the public distribution network. There is one leak in Wright Street that has been there for at least 10 years. It has now got algae growing on the footpath which it crosses to get to the gutter. Anyone looking can find many more such leaks without the assistance of water meters.

Wellington Water says if it is 40cm past the toby it is the householder's responsibility to fix a leak. The law enables them to take this, or virtually any stance they want. So why does the householder not fix it? There are two reasons:

- Cost. A plumber will often charge two to three times more to fix a leak between the toby and the house than would be charged by a contractor fixing the same leak for Wellington Water.
- Household water pressure is fine. The householder doesn't have a water supply problem caused by the leak, so why fix it?

Whose responsibility is it to fix the water leak between the toby and the residence, Wellington Water or the resident's?

[redacted] have a shared driveway and the toby for the water supply is at the start of the drive. The pipe is under the asphalted drive and has been laid for about 20 years. In that time the pipes have leaked substantial amounts of water on 8 occasions the most recent being November 2020– January 2021. Because the leaks if left unrepaired will damage the drive they have to be fixed. Every repairer who turned up to fix the leaks over the years have told me that our problem is excessive water pressure. I have kept some of the leaky pipe that has been repaired. Wellington Water representatives viewed it and confirmed the pipe is new and fit for purpose. They have confirmed that the problem is excessive water pressure. I asked Wellington Water to fix the water pressure problem on their side of the toby the second to last time we had a leak. They said no, it would be too expensive. I asked them to fix it on our side of the toby by installing a water pressure regulator on our pipe. They said no it is private property and is not their responsibility. To install a WPR would cost us $8000 to fix a problem created by the water supplier.

Recently Wellington Water decided to fix the water pressure issue on their side of the toby. It will be done in two years' time. The reason for carrying out this work they say is to "learn" how the long life of the aging pipes in the Brooklyn Vogeltown suburbs can be extended if the water pressure is regulated and controlled.

Wellington City Council scheduled a discussion in its long term plan on the installation of water meters at a cost of $144 million. This was put on hold because of the proposed three waters legislation where water meters again feature as a proposal directed at conserving water by means of market pricing.

Water meters to charge for commercial use is not an issue. Wellington already does that. However, access to water for residents is an internationally recognized human right. Is such a human right (which according to the UN underpins many other human rights) best discharged by the creation of a market for water supply and consumption?

A study in Auckland found that 70% of water consumption in households was for showers, toilets and laundry. These are things we all need. The amount of water used for these purposes can vary greatly depending on the water efficiency of the shower, toilet and washing machine. Old inefficient appliances can consume double what is required by water efficient appliances.

If landlords renting housing were required to supply water efficient appliances, if residents on lower incomes had their appliances upgraded for free by the water supplier, if the water provider fixed all leaks up to the residence, how much water could be saved? What would the cost of that be? How does it compare to spending $144 million on water meters that will not save one drop of water? A water supply and use system that depends on kiwi's supporting each other, (remember the team of 5 million and kindness), will unquestionably produce better results for everyone with regard to access to water (just as it did for public health with Covid). The cost will be reduced and everyone will have their human right to water guaranteed.

This way of dealing with the supply of water needs the asset to be publicly owned. Mixed funding models are part of the slippery slope heading towards private profit and markets. Think of electricity: we now have a subsidy for old people so they can afford to heat their home during winter. If you are young, poor and can't afford it, never mind. Turn the heater off, shut your windows day and night to try and keep warm, and get sick.

People have a right to water so should have a right to say how access to it should be governed. Publicly owned water assets should be subject the democratic control and accountability.

Technology that has a high cost and no real purpose other than to charge for water by volume should be subject to a referendum of residents. I am confident if spin were replaced with facts few would vote to have water meters.

I support the provision of water being based on the Residential Water Declaration:

RESIDENTIAL WATER DECLARATION

Recognising that clean water is a taonga, and access to it is a human right,

And that water in New Zealand comes from rainfall which is free,

We oppose water metering and charges based on water volume use, as this is regressive and increases social inequality, instead preferring payment by a standard rates charge that is proportionally based on the value of the residence.

And we support conservation of water, by requiring that all water pipe repairs up to a residence are the responsibility of the water provider, and by relying on the solidarity of citizens to conserve water in the event of a temporary shortage.

Further, as access to water is a human right, the water provider must be a public asset that is directly accountable to the electorate.