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Tēnā koutou

Wellington Water matters

On behalf of Civil Contractors New Zealand (CCNZ), I want to put on record our concern at the way discussions about contracting by Wellington Water have taken place over recent weeks.

As civic leaders across the greater Wellington region, you have a responsibility to lead conversations about the major challenges facing our towns, cities and regions in a considered and factual way. That responsibility extends to the execution of your duties as members of the Wellington Water Committee.

CCNZ is the national association for infrastructure construction, with 540 contractor members who work to physically construct and maintain the country's transport, water, energy and other infrastructure networks; and 320 associate members who provide equipment and services to contractors. Our contractors undertake approximately \$12b in capital and maintenance works each year, and employ approximately 60,000 people.

It is clear to us that the discussion around issues at Wellington Water quickly deteriorated into a blame game, with many at the centre of these conversations not having taken the time or care to better understand the causes of key issues with Wellington's water infrastructure.

To support a more meaningful conversation about how Wellington Water has come to find itself in its current state, I would like to take this opportunity to set out CCNZ's position on some of the key issues being discussed in the media.

Due to the condition of the existing pipe network, their premature failing, earthquake damage and new water standards, Wellington Water has been forced to focus on short-term, patch work repairs while replacing what they can. This has failed to address the underlying problem of an ageing water network. Our members often carry out this work, however they can only act within the scope and boundaries for that which they are contracted.

CCNZ has long been calling for a comprehensive programme of work to restore and maintain Wellington's water infrastructure, to ensure the region has a safe and reliable water supply. Despite this, it is now contractors who are being blamed for the inevitable outcome of Wellington Water's poorly managed budget and expenditure, which has come as a direct result of the decision to focus on repairs and not replacement, leaving the network in poor condition. The real drivers of cost escalation have largely been ignored.

It is also prudent that I place on record my dismay with the way in which some elected members have jumped at the opportunity to find a way to blame contractors without offering any sound basis for doing so. The scale of conjecture adopted shows that some elected members are inclined to speak first and seek facts second. The reputational damage that this has caused our members is real, unacceptable, and avoidable, and I am surprised that these elected members are prepared to leave themselves exposed in this way.

Instead of being focused on the true task at hand—delivering and maintaining water assets for our communities—we are now entering a second week of finger-pointing in the media. I write this to restate the common goal we all share: delivering on a long-term water infrastructure plan for the region to ensure that community needs are met.

We need a better platform for constructive conversation, and I welcome the opportunity to support your collective efforts towards making progress on our shared goal of delivering a safe and reliable water system. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Best regards,



Alan Pollard
Chief Executive
Civil Contractors New Zealand Inc

