

11/2/2026

File ref: 26-MP-03

Hon Simon Watts
Minister of Local Government
Wellington Water

CC: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister

CC: Matt Prosser
Chief Executive, WCC

CC: Will Peet
Chair, Tiaki Wai

CC: Ros Connelly
Chair, Wellington Water Committee

CC: Mana Whenua representatives

Dear Minister

Re: Moa Point investigation

I appreciated our constructive meeting with the Prime Minister on Monday. The 4/2/2026 failure of the Moa Point treatment plant resulting in an unconsented discharge is very serious. I am pleased that we discussed and agreed there should be a rapid, appropriately independent and properly empowered review. Such a review should ensure there is public accountability about what happened, to give everyone good information about the response to date and any adjustments to it that may be required, and to help prevent a similar occurrence anywhere else in New Zealand.

I am mindful that the treatment plant and its operations are scheduled to transfer to Tiaki Wai Metro Water from 1 July.

Particularly because of that impending deadline, I agree with you that an appropriate form of review could be a Crown Review Team appointed by you under section 258 of the Local Government Act 2002.

Maintaining necessary independence would necessitate you finalising the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of that Crown Review Team.

You asked for my input into what the ToRs should include. In preparing my response to you in my capacity as Mayor of Wellington City Council (the current plant owner), I have consulted with the Chair of Tiaki Wai Metro Water Ltd as the future plant owner, the Chair of the Wellington Water Committee as the representative of Wellington Water's shareholders and to whom the Chair of Wellington Water reports, Wellington City Councillors and Pou Iwi, and mana whenua representatives.

The Crown Review Team should consider, on the balance of probabilities:

1. What was the cause of the 4/2/2026 failure?
 - a. What were the critical physical contributors to the failure (for example including any issues with the design, construction, maintenance, systems or operations, and compliance performance)?
 - b. What was known and reported, or not reported, about those critical physical contributors to the failures, or potential warning indicators that may have led to the critical contributors being discovered?
 - c. What was the timeline of critical contributors to the failure?
2. What has been the damage caused and what measures and monitoring, if any, could have prevented it?
 - a. What has been the damage to the plant?
 - b. What has been the impact on the environment?
 - c. What has been the impact on affected communities and culture, and businesses?
3. Was the initial response adequate, and how could it have been improved?
 - a. How and when was the failure detected?
 - b. What was the sequence of events after the failure was detected?
 - c. What arrangements were in place for relevant organisations to stand up a response to a failure of this nature, were they followed, and were they effective?
 - d. What specific measures were put in place to protect public health and the environment, and what improvements could be made?
 - e. Were all relevant regulators appropriately notified within required timeframes, and what have regulators required?

4. Were the governance, management and contract arrangements in place at the time of the failure appropriate?
 - a. Was the management structure, including the contracting environment between Wellington Water Limited and Veolia and any other contractors, appropriate for the best-practise management of wastewater at Moa Point?
 - b. Were the governance, oversight and accountability arrangements in place between Wellington City Council, Wellington Water Limited, Veolia and any other relevant agency effective in practice?
 - c. Were arrangements suitable for giving all parties knowledge of latent and emerging risks and issues?
 - d. Were arrangements suitable for effective risk and issue management?
5. What other factors, if any, are relevant for preventing or reducing the seriousness of a recurrence in the Wellington region for Tiaki Wai Metro Water Ltd as the future owner/operator, or anywhere in New Zealand?
6. Any other matters the reviewers wish to raise to inform and strengthen the recovery (including any issues related to the environment, affected communities and culture, and business).

Because the event is ongoing, I would encourage you to consider the merits of the Crown Review Team providing interim reporting rather than wait for the entire ToRs to have been satisfied. Transparency with Wellingtonians and all New Zealanders is essential, so it would be my expectation that all reporting should be proactively released as appropriate.

I acknowledge there might be value in a further reporting remediation is completed, which would be a matter for Tiaki Wai.

I look forward to your advice about how you intend to proceed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Little". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon HW Andrew Little
Mayor of Wellington
Email: mayor@wcc.govt.nz