

## **Watercare Services Limited**

### **Radio Spectrum Band III Consultation (VHF Band 3 174-230MHz)**

Watercare Services is the largest Water and Wastewater Company within New Zealand who provide Water and Wastewater services to 1.4 million people across a geographical area of approx. 340 square kilometres within the greater Auckland region. To service our customers we are heavily reliant on radio communication systems and have over 1000+ facilities monitored in real-time. Some of the terrain we operate over is quite challenging not only for radio communications but also staff and equipment.

The proposed changes to the radio spectrum VHF band 3 present a number of opportunities for Watercare to improve its customer focus, deliver additional services as technology advances and also provide a means to address some current issues e.g. some remote sites struggle to communicate at times via SCADA ~ 495MHz. The VHF band 3 lower frequencies would be better suited to communicate with these challenging sites minimising dropout albeit with a reduced data throughput.

With regards to new technologies Watercare is in the process of implementing smart water meters at Waiuku. The advent of smart metering opens up new ways for customers to interact with us and manage their consumption [https://www.watercare.co.nz/common-content/water-meters/meter\\_replacement\\_project/Pages/Waiuku-smart-meter-trial.aspx](https://www.watercare.co.nz/common-content/water-meters/meter_replacement_project/Pages/Waiuku-smart-meter-trial.aspx).

In summary Watercare considers a portion of the VHF band 3 is made available to utilities for the purposes of pursuing new technologies to enhance customers' expectations, provide support for critical infrastructure and also Asset Management Plans (AMP). Furthermore having a high regard for staff safety there exists the potential to monitor lone workers particularly in remote areas in real-time.

With regards to disaster relief Watercare is a member of the Auckland Lifelines Group <http://www.aelg.org.nz/> and believes there is some merit in reserving a portion of the VHF band 3 to support disaster relief activities with a view to developing best practice approaches to mitigation, readiness and response measures.

Watercare would expect any allocated frequency to be licenced and appropriately controlled to mitigate any interference issues and provide a means of recourse. We believe the frequency should be restricted to digital technology as this is primarily suited to modern off the shelf technologies. Furthermore Land Mobile Radio (LMR) is favoured due to our vast operational area.