

# Wai Auckland: Why collaboration can make water the new normal

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Auckland enjoys an abundant supply of quality tap water but has a limited supply of public drinking fountains and a pervasive promotion of sugary drinks. In response to these drivers, *Wai Auckland* was born from *Healthy Auckland Together* (HAT), an intersectoral collaboration, to tackle obesity in the region using an innovative comprehensive public health approach.

Promoting water is not new and there is already a lot of activity taking place. The purpose of *Wai Auckland* is to focus and unite existing efforts to influence change in a more scalable and sustainable way. Programme partners have been engaged based on the shared goals of making water (preferably tap) the first and easy choice for people in Auckland, as well as displacing sugary drinks.

Partners are involved at all levels of the programme, from governance and advisory to operational and working groups. The core coalition is made up of Auckland Council, Auckland District Health Board, Auckland Regional Public Health Service, Auckland Transport, Counties Manukau Health and Watercare.

*Wai Auckland* consists of four separate but closely linked workstreams – infrastructure, policy and advocacy, communications and marketing, and community action. Partner involvement varies depending on relevant expertise. This structure enables change across the whole system - urban planning, infrastructure, policy, supply and retail, community, health, education, and sport.

With the implementation of *Wai Auckland* now underway, the benefits (and challenges) of working in collaboration with intersectoral partners are becoming apparent, including,

- access to additional resources within partner organisations
- broader networks to affect change beyond the health sector
- enthusiasm for contributing to a bigger goal
- diverse perspectives for more effective problem solving
- importance of framing messages for different audiences
- maintaining momentum and balancing competing priorities with partners.