

Biosolids

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)



October 2025

1

What are biosolids?

Biosolids are the soil-like ‘leftovers’ from the wastewater treatment process. Part of it comes from treated human waste (poo), but it’s also made up of the microorganisms (or good bugs) that help clean our treated human waste. These bugs break down carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus. After treatment, the remaining material is digested (like composting), producing methane for energy. What’s left is called biosolids.

In Auckland, we create 175,000 tonnes of biosolids every year.

Biosolids have special characteristics that mean careful consideration must be taken in their disposal or reuse:

- they can contain pathogens
- they can contain very low concentrations of contaminants, including heavy metals, microplastics and forever chemicals like PFAS
- they can be smelly
- about 75 to 80 percent of biosolids is water (like most foods)
- they have the potential to be reused as fuel or fertiliser, but the preparation takes energy and resources.

2

Are biosolids related to sewage sludge or wastewater?

Yes. Biosolids come from treated wastewater, but they are processed to meet safety and environmental standards before reuse or disposal.





3 What are the options for managing biosolids?

Biosolids can be used and disposed of in several ways. While there are some beneficial re-uses, most cannot be carried out at the scale we will need to handle Auckland's biosolids.

We need the solution to be:

- capable of handling more than 175,000 tonnes of biosolids each year
- already proven as reliable at a similar scale for at least five years
- able to be consented and operational by 2035.

We also need to consider:

- mana whenua feedback on our options
- public feedback on our options
- emissions
- transportation
- location
- impact on the environment
- cost.

4 Are any options smelly or harmful to the environment?

While we haven't selected a solution for managing biosolids in the future, we know that we will need to meet strict environmental standards to limit the impact on the community and environment.

5 Who pays for the management of biosolids?

Biosolids management is included in your wastewater charges. Customers with properties connected to our networks contribute via their monthly bill.