



Central South Island Water | General Manager Operations

Position Description and
Additional Information

October 2026





Position Description | Central South Island Water | General Manager Operations

Title:	General Manager Operations
Reports to:	Chief Executive
Direct Reports:	Manager Water and Wastewater, Manager Reticulation, Manager Stormwater, Manager Operations Support
Function:	Three Waters Operations
Head Office:	Timaru

Central South Island Water | In Summary

Central South Island Water has been established to deliver drinking water and wastewater services across the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, serving approximately 25,000 connections. From its planned operational commencement on 1 July 2027, it will bring together the councils' existing water teams, assets and service arrangements within this standalone organisation. It will also provide stormwater services to both councils (the method of service provision is currently being determined).

The organisation will be responsible for safe, reliable services, sustainable infrastructure investment and a direct relationship with customers through billing, service support and community engagement. Its founding priorities are strong leadership, decisions grounded in reliable data and evidence, and genuine customer focus. It will build a culture of performance, accountability and continuous improvement where people can develop their careers and contribute to better services.

Led by the Chief Executive and four General Managers across Operations, Planning and Delivery, Corporate Services, and Customer and Community, the executive team will share responsibility for establishing the organisation, shaping its culture and delivering outcomes across both districts. Each General Manager will lead their portfolio while contributing to decisions and priorities that support the success of Central South Island Water as a whole.

Role purpose

The General Manager Operations (the GM) will provide executive leadership of safe, reliable and compliant drinking water and wastewater services across the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, and stormwater services delivered to the councils. The GM will unite and develop operational teams, strengthen engagement and build a culture of performance, accountability and customer service. Through capable leaders and service providers, the GM will secure continuity through transition, establish consistent standards and use reliable data to improve operational decisions, processes and service outcomes. As a member of the executive team, the GM will contribute to organisational direction and share responsibility for the success of Central South Island Water as a whole.





Key accountability areas

Collective executive leadership | the GM will

- Work with the Chief Executive and fellow General Managers to shape organisational direction, agree priorities and take shared responsibility for performance and customer outcomes.
- Bring evidence-based operational advice and constructive challenge to executive decisions on investment, service levels and pricing, making operating costs, risks and customer impacts clear.
- Lead across portfolio boundaries, support collective decisions and model a culture of accountability, continuous improvement and customer service.
- Provide visible executive leadership of health, safety and wellbeing, taking shared responsibility for a culture where risks are understood, people speak up and safe work is expected.
- Ensure decisions, resources and assurance support the safety of employees, contractors and the public, with clear accountability and learning from incidents.

People leadership and performance | the GM will

- Lead and develop a team of leaders who take ownership of their portfolios and contribute to organisation-wide outcomes.
- Set clear expectations, measurable outcomes and decision-making authority; coach direct reports to strengthen their judgement, capability and confidence.
- Build engagement and a culture of performance and accountability through visible leadership, regular review of results, feedback, recognition and timely, constructive conversations when expectations are not met.
- Create opportunities for learning and career development; prioritise succession planning, knowledge transfer and specialist capability so the organisation retains the expertise needed for reliable services.

Establishment and transition | the GM will

- Lead operational readiness for commencement on 1 July 2027, ensuring people, contracts, systems and compliance arrangements support safe, reliable services from day one.
- Bring the two districts' teams together around consistent service standards, processes and operational technology, retaining local knowledge and building on effective existing practices.
- Resolve transition risks and dependencies with fellow executives, councils and providers, setting clear readiness milestones and an improvement programme beyond commencement.

Service delivery and operational performance | the GM will

- Set direction, service standards and measurable performance expectations for drinking water, wastewater and network operations across both districts.
- Hold managers and providers accountable for service reliability, maintenance and incident response, using performance data to identify trends, test causes and improve results.





- Ensure appropriate separation of drinking water and wastewater treatment, with coordinated support and an operating model that delivers consistent, efficient services.

Trade waste management and commercial performance | the GM will

- Lead trade waste management, including relationships with major industrial customers, ensuring discharge requirements protect treatment capacity, infrastructure and environmental outcomes.
- Drive improvements in monitoring, discharge data and treatment cost analysis to identify charging gaps and strengthen fair, consistent cost recovery.
- Work with Corporate Services and Customer and Community to translate reliable operational evidence into pricing recommendations and accurate billing, with pricing strategies agreed collectively by the executive team.

Safety compliance and resilience | the GM will

- Champion a strong safety culture and provide executive oversight of drinking water safety, environmental compliance and operational health, safety and quality.
- Ensure reliable monitoring, effective controls and assurance give the Chief Executive and Board a clear view of compliance and risk, with timely escalation and corrective action.
- Build resilience through clear incident leadership, business continuity and cover for critical capabilities; use incident reviews to strengthen preparedness and prevent repeat failures.

Contracts and stormwater services | the GM will

- Lead commercial and performance oversight of major maintenance and response contracts, including the existing Timaru and Mackenzie arrangements, holding providers accountable for safety, service quality and value.
- Lead an evidence-based review of maintenance and response delivery, assessing contract extension, renegotiation, in-house provision and wider district coverage with fellow executives, while securing continuity through contract expiry and transition.
- Ensure stormwater services meet agreed council requirements, with clear performance reporting and coordination of asset ownership, consent and other responsibilities retained by the councils.

Operational technology and information | the GM will

- Lead the strategy and performance of operational technology, including SCADA and telemetry, ensuring reliable, secure systems and consistent practices support service delivery and operational decisions.
- Work with Corporate Services to align operational technology with company-wide digital governance, cyber security and resilience, retaining clear operational ownership.
- Set expectations for reliable operational and asset data; use condition, failure and maintenance insights to prioritise work and inform executive decisions and long-term investment with Planning and Delivery.



Resources and continuous improvement | the GM will

- Lead operational planning and resource allocation, aligning budgets, workforce capability and contractor capacity with agreed service priorities and affordability.
- Lead continuous process improvement using performance data, staff insights and customer feedback to improve productivity, reliability and service quality while maintaining safety and compliance.
- Influence capital planning and commissioning so new and renewed assets are practical to operate and maintain, with investment choices supported by evidence of lifecycle costs, risk and service benefits.

Customer outcomes and assurance | the GM will

- Embed customer service expectations across operational teams and providers; work with Customer and Community to connect fault reporting, field response and timely outage information through to resolution.
- Provide the Chief Executive and Board with clear, evidence-based advice on performance, material risks and improvement priorities; use service and customer trends to identify where action is needed.
- Take accountability for accurate, timely operational reporting and assurance, working with Corporate Services to support coordinated regulatory reporting and follow-through on improvement commitments.

Person specification

The role requires a visible, strategic operational leader who can build capable teams, strengthen engagement and deliver reliable services in a regulated environment. The successful candidate will combine sound operational judgement with evidence-based decisions, continuous improvement and a clear commitment to customers. Relevant transferable experience will be considered alongside sector knowledge.

Experience

- Senior leadership of operational services in water, utilities, infrastructure or another regulated, asset-intensive environment, with responsibility for multidisciplinary teams and service continuity.
- A strong record of improving safety, compliance and service performance through data-driven decisions, disciplined resource allocation and continuous process improvement.
- Experience overseeing substantial maintenance or service contracts, assessing delivery options and holding contractors accountable for safety, quality and commercial outcomes.
- Experience strengthening engagement and performance, developing leaders and integrating teams through change, with effective succession planning and retention of specialist knowledge.
- Water and wastewater operational experience is valuable. Candidates from other sectors must demonstrate the ability to lead specialist water teams and make sound decisions in a public health and environmental context.





- Experience contributing to executive decisions and advising governance bodies, with responsibility for incident leadership and services where reliability and customer response are critical.

Qualifications

- A relevant tertiary qualification in engineering, water services, science, operations or a related discipline, or equivalent depth of relevant professional experience.
- Relevant professional registration or water-sector qualifications would be valuable.

Skills and leadership qualities

- Sound judgement in operational risk, drinking water and wastewater requirements, with the ability to test technical advice, data quality and underlying assumptions.
- Visible, inclusive people leadership, with effective coaching, clear expectations and accountability; ability to unite teams across locations and create opportunities for development.
- Strategic and commercial judgement, including the ability to interpret operational and financial data, assess delivery options and connect maintenance priorities to long-term investment.
- Calm, decisive leadership during incidents and uncertainty, with appropriate escalation and clear communication of service impacts.
- Strong communication and relationship skills with staff, contractors, councils and fellow executives, and the ability to translate customer expectations into operational standards.
- Ability to lead continuous improvement, challenge established practices and turn evidence into practical action, with integrity and commitment to the success of the whole organisation.

Our Process



OUTREACH AND ADVERTISING | Applications close 6 November 2026

Potential candidates identified through targeted search; applications reviewed and responded to.



APPLICANT SCREENING | Late October Early November

Initial screening of applications as they are received. This may include a discussion with candidates about their motivations for applying. We aim to run a timely and efficient process.



SELECTING AND SHORTLISTING | Early to Mid November

Once the role has closed our team will present the most qualified candidates to the client. Within this period, all applicants will receive notification of the status of their application.



CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS | Early to Mid November

Decipher Group prioritises a robust and consistent interview framework, based on a behavioural and competency-based assessment. Candidates will be advised of the interview structure and who will be present on the panel. All interviewed candidates will receive prompt feedback and will be advised of next steps once we have debriefed with the interview panel.



VETTING AND DUE DILIGENCE | Mid to Late November

We conduct thorough background checks and referencing to further assess competencies of preferred candidate/s. Decipher Group utilises a third-party provider for pre-employment and probity checks such as criminal history, qualification, employment history and bankruptcy. Our team will notify you in advance prior to us contacting your referees. Throughout the entire process, candidate confidentiality and privacy remain an absolute priority.



DECISION AND ONBOARDING | Late November

Following a rigorous evaluation, a conditional offer of employment will be made, subject to the completion of the above stage. Our team will communicate regularly with both the client and the successful candidate during this period. At the conclusion of the recruitment process, all remaining candidates will be notified, with the opportunity for feedback.

GM Operations – Inspire Performance

- Unite operational teams through visible leadership and fresh thinking
- Build a culture of safety, service and continuous improvement
- Join a collaborative executive team with shared responsibility for success

Central South Island Water | Help shape what comes next

Central South Island Water has been established to deliver drinking water and wastewater services across the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, alongside stormwater services for both councils. Preparing to commence operations on 1 July 2027, the organisation has a clear ambition: reliable services, decisions grounded in evidence and a genuine focus on customers and the communities it serves.

The new role of GM Operations is an opportunity to bring people together, strengthen leadership and shape how essential services are delivered - building on local expertise while creating consistent expectations and better ways of working. Sound like you?

About the opportunity | Establish, Build, Shape

Reporting to the Chief Executive, you will join three other new General Managers who will collectively build and lead Central South Island Water. Your contribution will extend across the organisation, helping the executive team make sound decisions, navigate competing priorities and deliver shared outcomes.

You will lead drinking water, wastewater and network operations, together with stormwater services delivered to the councils. Your immediate focus will be preparing teams, contracts and operational systems for a safe transition and dependable service from day one.

People leadership will be central to your success. You will develop your leaders, strengthen engagement and create a culture where expectations are clear, people take ownership and career development matters. Succession planning and knowledge transfer will help retain the expertise on which these services depend.

Alongside this, you will bring strategic oversight to maintenance and service delivery arrangements, using operational evidence to assess performance, challenge established practices and inform investment. Working closely with fellow executives, you will connect operational decisions with customer needs, affordability and long-term asset performance.

Your priorities will include:

- Leading operational readiness while maintaining safe, reliable and compliant services.
- Building leadership capability, engagement and accountability across both districts.
- Reviewing maintenance and contracting arrangements to strengthen service quality and value.
- Using performance data, staff insights and customer feedback to improve processes and guide decisions.

About you | Fresh thinking, New ideas

You are an operational leader who brings clear direction, sound judgement and the ability to get the best from people. You can lead through experienced specialists, ask searching questions and turn strategy into practical improvements.

Your background could be in water, utilities, infrastructure or another regulated, asset-intensive environment and we welcome transferable capability and fresh thinking from beyond water and local government.

You will bring:

- Senior operational leadership experience across multidisciplinary teams and infrastructure.
- A record of strengthening engagement, developing leaders and building a culture of performance.
- Strong judgement across safety, compliance, operational risk and incident leadership.
- Commercial capability in maintenance, contracting and resource allocation, supported by confident use of performance data.
- The ability to contribute to executive decisions and build effective relationships with staff, providers and councils.

You will be comfortable with ambiguity, willing to challenge established approaches and committed to working as one executive team. Above all, you will connect strong people leadership with safe operations and dependable customer service.

Help establish an organisation, develop its people and lift the performance of essential services.

How to apply

For a copy of the position description and to apply, visit the Decipher Group website on <https://deciphergroup.co.nz/job-opportunities/general-manager-operations/>

To discover more about Central South Island Water and the partner Councils visit www.timaru.govt.nz and www.mckenzie.govt.nz

To make a time for a confidential discussion about the role, contact Lisa Edwards at Decipher Group by text to 021 240 4410 or email lisa@deciphergroup.co.nz.

Applications close: Friday 6 November 2026.

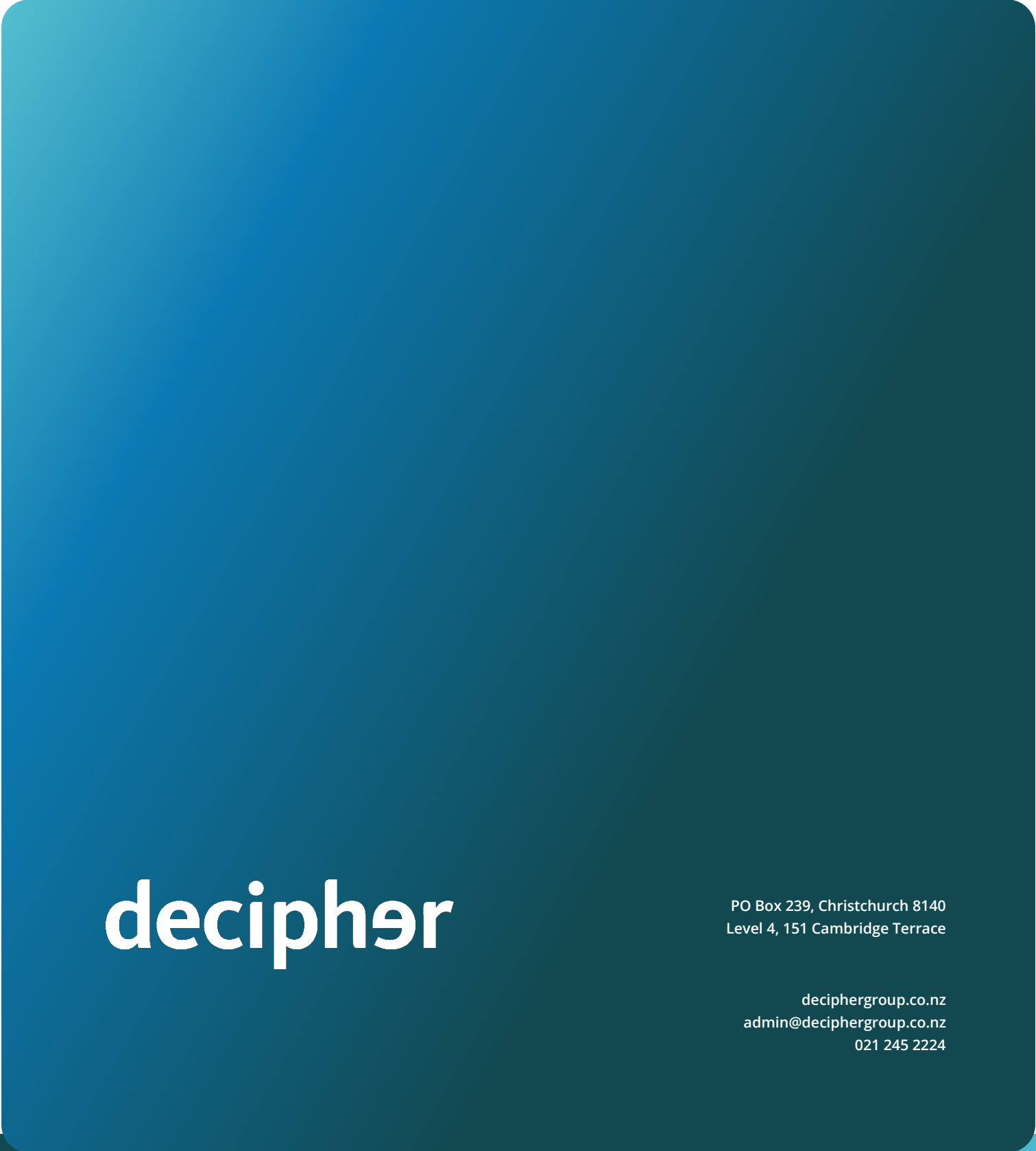
Please do not email us your CV and Cover Letter.
Please use the *Apply Now* link on our website.



Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

Decipher Group cares deeply about helping individuals achieve their full potential and supporting organisations to thrive by working toward a more progressive future.

Fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging that truly values individual differences, backgrounds, and perspectives ignites creativity and new ideas – and this is part of what makes our team exceptional. For us, progress is the only goal worth benchmarking.



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