

# The use of INFFER in the development of the Waikato and Waipa River Restoration Strategy

**Geoff Park**<sup>1</sup>, Keri Neilson<sup>2</sup>, Anna Roberts<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Natural Decisions Pty Ltd*, <sup>2</sup>*Envirostrat Consulting Ltd*

The Investment Framework for Environmental Resources (INFFER) is a tailor-made benefit:cost analysis approach to help people determine whether their environmental/natural resource projects will deliver tangible results within budget. It incorporates consideration of the full range of benefits (values), cost and risks associated with the design and implementation of environmental projects. Its development was motivated by poor environmental decision-making in Australia. Over the past two years INFFER has been adapted for use in a Waikato context, and is being used to prioritise projects and assess their overall benefits and costs as part of the development of the Waikato Waipa River Restoration Strategy. The development of the Strategy is a partnership between Waikato Regional Council, DairyNZ and the Waikato River Authority, and its intent is to guide future 'on the ground' activities for all organisations undertaking restoration in the Waikato and Waipa River Catchments. A key driver in adapting INFFER to the New Zealand context and for use in the development of the River Restoration Strategy has been to better incorporate iwi values in project assessment and prioritisation, and in particular to assess the potential impact of projects on achieving the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River. The process has involved stakeholders understanding the concepts behind benefit:cost analysis, gaining confidence that the approach will work and conducting workshops with iwi, communities, industry, local and central government and technical specialists. To date close to 40 projects in the Waipa catchment have been prioritised and assessed in terms of their benefits and costs. The projects are broad ranging including protection and restoration of significant catchments and waterways, taonga species and underrepresented habitat types, and enhancing access and connection of iwi and communities to the river.