

15 December 2021

Tēnā koe

Further to the Ministry of Health's letter of 11 November 2021, I am writing to update you on implementation planning for the Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Act 2021 (the Act) and seek information from you to assist with this.

Next steps

I expect to consider issuing directions to fluoridate from mid-2022 onwards and implementing these directions will take a staged approach. This will align with the significant reforms to the Three Waters infrastructure announced last month.

I encourage all local authorities with un-fluoridated community water supplies that service over 500 people to start fluoridation-related preparatory work now (a list of these supplies is attached as **Appendix one**), especially in areas with larger populations or that have poor oral health outcomes.

Please note local authorities do not need to wait for a potential direction from me to start fluoridating water supplies in their area. Community water fluoridation will substantially reduce rates of preventable tooth decay and it is widely recognised as one of the most important and proven public health measures to improve oral health

To support early adoption, the Ministry has a limited amount of capital works funding available for local authorities that are willing and able to begin the capital works to fluoridate by the end of 2022. The Ministry will provide more information about funding applications when it has received the information requested below. The Ministry will likely prioritise financial support for communities with poor oral health, or where there are disparities in oral health outcomes.

I recognise that there are some complex council-owned supplies across the country where it may not be feasible to fluoridate in a short timeframe. As part of the Three Waters reforms, new water services entities are due to be established in July 2024. These entities could be responsible for fluoridating these supplies (subject to any directions being issued). The Ministry and the Department of Internal Affairs will work together on how this will be managed as part of the asset management planning processes to establish the new entities. These processes will start next year.

The Ministry requests some information from you now

The Ministry is now seeking information on the fluoridation 'readiness' of local authorities, and any cost and planning pressures they face. This will allow the Ministry to better understand how implementation of fluoridation will be phased¹.

We ask that you provide the following information for each of your council-owned un-fluoridated drinking water supplies that service a population of 500 people or more:

- the status of your fluoridation infrastructure
- whether fluoridation capital works is underway or planned
- the expected date for completion of capital works (if relevant)
- the estimated capital works cost to fluoridate your supplies
- the budgeted capital works costs to fluoridate supplies included in long term plans or budgets
- the number of months required to fluoridate water supplies if a direction is issued
- other information useful for implementation planning.

Please also confirm the list of un-fluoridated supplies controlled by your local authority (see **Appendix one**) and provide the information above for any additional supplies that are not listed.

I request that you provide this information by completing and returning the attached spreadsheet by 11 March 2022 to fluoride@health.govt.nz. You can also use this contact email if you have any questions or would like to discuss matters further.

I look forward to working with you on this initiative to help improve the oral health of the communities you serve.

Nāku noa, nā



Dr Ashley Bloomfield
Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Hauora
Director-General of Health

Cc: Jon Lamonte, Chief Executive, Watercare
Colin Crampton, Chief Executive, Wellington Water
Bill Bayfield, Chief Executive, Taumata Arowai
District Health Board Chief Executives
Public Health Unit Managers

¹ This information is not being sought as part of my requirements under section 116G the Act. I will ask local authorities to formally provide comment on these provisions in advance of issuing directions regarding specific water supplies.