

WATER REGULATION UPDATE

16 MARCH 2022 – 4.00PM



ATTENDEES

Elected Members: Mayor Barry, Cr Dyer, Cr Edwards, Cr Hislop, Cr Mitchell, Cr Shaw, Cr Rasheed, Deputy Mayor Lewis, Cr Sutton. Cr G Barratt?

Staff: Ms J Miller, Chief Executive, Ms H Oram, Director of Economy and Development and Ms J Randall, Democracy Advisor

Presenter: Mr C Barker, Director of Regulatory Services, Wellington Water Ltd.

APOLOGIES

Elected Member apologies:

ABSENCE

Elected Members: Cr Briggs, Cr Brown and Cr Milne

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE BRIEFING

The purpose of the briefing is for representatives of Wellington Water Ltd.(Wellington Water) to provide an update on potential changes to water regulations to elected members.

PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY SERVICES, WELLINGTON WATER LTD – FLUORIDE UPDATE

Mr Barker advised fluoridation had been suspended from some of Lower Hutt's water supply. He explained Lower Hutt's water had fluoride added from four plants, in Wainuiomata, Waterloo, Gear Island and Te Marua. He said following a review the building used for dosing fluoride at the Gear Island plant had been deemed a health and safety risk and was unable to be accessed. In addition, a curtain at the Te Marua plant that ensured fluoride was mixed properly had needed repair. He added the repairs would take five to nine months. As a result, suburbs supplied water from Te Marua (Stokes Valley and Manor Park) were not currently fluoridated. He highlighted the fluoridation system was now over 20 years old and had become increasingly inconsistent in its fluoride dosing, with fluoride levels in Lower Hutt's water well below the levels recommended by the Ministry of Health. He said Wellington Water's long-term goal was to upgrade all plants to ensure they were dosing to the required level. He noted the Ministry of Health would be mandating fluoridation across New Zealand from July 2022. He advised that Council's communications team had been provided with information packs so they could inform residents.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

- Council decides which areas receive fluoride, not Wellington Water - Wellington Water inherited the current mandate. A survey on whether Petone and Korokoro residents still want to opt out of fluoridation would be a matter for Council.
- Wellington Water did not announce the decision to stop fluoridation from some of the plants immediately, because it was not clear how long the pause in fluoride dosing would need to be. Also, it needed to do due diligence to ensure the review was correct.
- The Waterloo Treatment Plant is currently dosing at the required level but is inconsistent. It is becoming more difficult to provide a reliable level of fluoride dosing. Work being done now will provide Wellington Water with a long-term solution and enable it to achieve 90% consistency.
- There have been inconsistencies across all plants over the past four years, but some plants have performed better than others.
- In 1999 70% of people surveyed in the Petone and Korokoro area did not want fluoridation. Their water is diverted before fluoride dosing occurs.

PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY SERVICES, WELLINGTON WATER LTD – REGULATION UPDATE

- Slide 1-2 – **Regulation programme:** An overview of the regulatory landscape of the water supply in the Wellington region.
- Slide 3 – **Source water – Ministry for the Environment (MoE):** The MoE wants monitoring to ensure zoning changes do not impact at risk areas of the catchment.
- Slide 4 – **Source water – Taumata Arowai:** Source Water Risk Management Plans are now required.
- Slide 5-6 – **Treatment and distribution – Taumata Arowai:** Wellington Water is required to update drinking water safety plans to comply.
- Slide 7 – **Environmental performance measures (Phase 1 2022):** Includes economic and environmental measures - Taumata Arowai want to ensure Wellington Water is economically viable. Wellington Water was not expecting the economic measures and is concerned there could be conflicting demands, ie affordability vs providing high water standards.
- Slide 8 – **Drinking water quality assurance rules:** Wellington Water has plans in place to show and measure water quality.
- Slide 9 – **Residence:** A plan for backflow devices is required to prevent water being sucked back into pipes if there is a drop in pressure. Wellington Water has a backflow plan and will be engaging with Council officers.

Slide 10 – **Looking forward:** By the end of the 2022-23 financial year Wellington Water will have completed the necessary templates and will be in a position to report that its compliance with regulatory requirements is on track.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

- Councils will be required to ensure risks are well considered in areas where water is sourced. For example, there may be places where bores are more susceptible to leaks.
- Wellington Water has always had catchment plans, but after the Havelock North incident, water safety plans have been required. There is now more rigour around plans.
- Clear KPIs for economic measures have not been specified in Taumata Arowai requirements. Some of these would depend on location.
- Wellington Water is ensuring all its documents keep the work of the Whaitua Committees front and centre. Wellington Water will view the rivers in the same way the Whaitua Committees view them. This is also expected by the regulator.

NEXT STEPS

- Wellington Water will report back to Council on its compliance progress in the 2022-23 financial year.

BRIEFING MATERIALS

Attachment – Regulation update presentation.

The briefing closed at 4.47pm