

22 June 2022

Gavin Ion  
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Tēnā koe Mr Ion

### **Community water fluoridation next steps**

Thank you for your response to my letter of 15 December 2021, providing information on the status of the fluoridation infrastructure in your area and the estimated costs and timeframes that would be necessary to fluoridate your drinking water supplies. This information has informed my decisions about which local authorities to consider first, in my decision-making about whether to issue directions to fluoridate.

I have now advised fourteen local authorities that I will soon decide whether to issue directions in relation to some of their drinking water supplies. In deciding which local authorities and water supplies to consider first, I took into account factors including local authority ability to implement fluoridation swiftly, and size and needs of populations served by the relevant water supplies.

Drinking water supplies controlled by your local authority are not included in the first set of potential directions to fluoridate. However, it is likely your situation will be considered in the coming months, and that a decision on whether to issue a direction to fluoridate your drinking water supplies will be made by the end of 2022. As I noted in my earlier letter, I am also mindful of current service delivery pressures across the water services and broader local government sector. In light of this, if I do issue directions for your water supplies, some of these may have compliance dates set for after July 2024 when the new water service entities are established as part of the Three Waters reforms.

When considering whether to issue any direction to fluoride, and as required under the new legislation, I will seek written comment from you on the estimated costs of fluoridation (including costs of ongoing monitoring and maintenance), and the date by which you could comply with a direction. I will also consider the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of fluoridation, and the oral health status, population size and estimated costs of fluoridation for the area served by each water supply.

Please note too that you do not need to wait for a potential direction from me to start fluoridating water supplies in your area. Community water fluoridation is widely recognised by national and international expert bodies to improve public health by substantially reducing rates of preventable tooth decay. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand we still have high rates of preventable tooth decay, particularly amongst Māori and

Pacific people, and people living in deprived communities. Evidence shows that community water fluoridation both improves the oral health of everyone and also has a proportionately larger benefit for these groups.

Thank you for your co-operation as we work together to improve the oral health of the communities we each serve.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Bloomfield', written in a cursive style.

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