



I, Robyn Jan Haisman-Welsh, Chief Dental Officer of Wellington affirm:

1. I am the Chief Dental Officer for the Ministry of Health ("the Ministry"), a role to which I was appointed in August 2010. I am a New Zealand qualified and registered dentist with a PhD in oral microbiology.
2. I am familiar with the matters at issue in this proceeding. While I am a dentist by training and I am knowledgeable about matters relating to dental health, the purpose of this evidence is to set out the Ministry's position on the fluoridation of water and how that position has been reached. I do not purport to give expert evidence as to the efficacy and safety of fluoridation *per se*.
3. I am authorised to attest to these matters on the Ministry's behalf.

#### **Summary of the Ministry Policy Position on Fluoridation**

4. The Ministry is the government's agent and key advisor on health and disability issues. The Ministry recommends water fluoridation as a safe, effective and affordable way to prevent and reduce tooth decay, for all people in a community with natural teeth. The Ministry, formerly the Department of Health, has supported water fluoridation in New Zealand since March 1952, when it gave its approval to the Hastings Borough Council to implement fluoridation.
5. In 2008, the Ministry's Executive Leadership Team reaffirmed the Ministry's position on water fluoridation and adopted the following statement:

*'The Ministry of Health specifically recommends the adjustment of fluoride to between 0.7 ppm and 1.0 ppm in drinking water as the most effective and efficient way of preventing dental caries in communities receiving a reticulated water supply, and strongly recommends the continuation and extension of water fluoridation programmes where technically feasible'.*

6. That remains the Ministry's position on community water fluoridation.

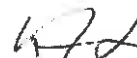


### **The Ministry's Role in Fluoridation Decisions**

7. Most New Zealanders are supplied with water by their local authority. Decision-making on community water fluoridation sits with local authorities rather than central government, neither the Minister of Health, the Ministry/Director-General of Health nor the District Health Boards has any direct influence over decisions to fluoridate community water supplies.
8. The Ministry's principal role, with respect to water supplies, is administering the requirements of the Health Act 1956 to mitigate any risks to public health. The Ministry and District Health Boards do play a role in supporting population, district and community-wide measures to improve, promote and protect public health.
9. It is in furtherance of its function to improve, promote and protect public health for the benefit of New Zealanders that the Ministry continues to take a leading role in reviewing the literature on the safety and effectiveness of fluoridation of water supplies, within New Zealand and internationally, and has taken steps to actively support the fluoridation of water supplies.

### **Review of Research on Fluoridation**

10. One aspect of the Ministry's role as advisor on health and disability issues is to provide advice on a range of health topics such as immunisation, breast-feeding, alcohol and tobacco consumption, infectious disease control and fluoridation.
11. In order to perform that function responsibly the Ministry gathers and analyses local and international evidence, considers the advice of other key health bodies, consults diverse and respected experts and regularly reviews its position on issues. The Ministry has developed its position on community water fluoridation using this approach.
12. The Ministry is aware that there are a number of individuals and organisations, both in New Zealand and overseas, that oppose fluoridation and believe fluoridation poses significant risks to public



health. As with most areas of research there are often individual papers that may report findings at odds with the mainstream.

13. The Ministry is concerned to ensure that it does not recommend public health measures that are, in fact, detrimental to public health. It is for that reason that, in reaching its stance in support of community water fluoridation, the Ministry has looked to be guided by a body of scientific experts and their review of the available international scientific research on community water fluoridation. The process of scientific inquiry ensures on-going testing, debate and comparison of evidence from a variety of sources.

#### NFIS

14. The Ministry of Health has funded a National Fluoridation Information Service (NFIS), a consortium of experts in community water fluoridation coordinated by Regional Public Health. NFIS includes the Hutt Valley DHB Community Dental Services, Environmental Science and Research (ESR), Centre for Public Health Research at Massey University and the National Poisons Centre. These partners provide expertise in toxicology, epidemiology, public health medicine and dental public health.
15. NFIS are tasked with monitoring and assessing international scientific research looking at the effectiveness and safety of water fluoridation programmes. NFIS then provide robust and independent scientific and technical information, advice and critical commentary on community water fluoridation in New Zealand to District Health Boards, Territorial Authorities and the Ministry. NFIS regularly publishes detailed scientific reports summarising international scientific research and reviews relevant to community water fluoridation. As part of that review NFIS specifically consider the implications of the review findings for the Ministry of Health's fluoridation policy. NFIS also publish "Advisories", which are brief, plain English reports on a particular fluoridation issue, intended to assist local decision makers in making decisions about the appropriateness or otherwise of fluoridation in their area. These documents are all publicly available on the NFIS website, [www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz).

16. The work of this body assists the Ministry in ensuring its position on community water fluoridation is based on evidence, is consistent with best practice and is appropriate for the New Zealand context.
17. To date the reviews have confirmed the benefits of fluoridation as a public health measure. NFIS's *Review of Scientific Reviews Relating to Water Fluoridation Published between January 2000 and July 2010*, published in 2011, advised the Ministry that the implications of that research, for the Ministry's fluoridation policy, are that the beneficial effects of fluoridation are evident, as is the importance of the retention of fluoridation as a public health intervention.<sup>1</sup>
18. I have read Robin Whyman's affidavit, setting out his opinion that community water fluoridation is an effective, safe and proportionate response to the problems of dental caries. Dr Whyman is one of the advisors engaged by NFIS to provide information and analysis on fluoridation research. His evidence is consistent with the advice that the Ministry has received on the benefits, safety and cost effectiveness of community water fluoridation.

#### Research

19. Over the years, in addition to the Ministry monitoring the scientific literature, it has commissioned research, advisories and commentaries when issues have been raised about the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation. In addition to the work undertaken by NFIS these include:
  - (a) A report in 2000 by ESR that investigated if there was any persuasive epidemiological evidence associated with optimal fluoridation, particularly bone fracture, osteosarcoma, fluorosis and other adverse health effects.<sup>2</sup>
  - (b) Research in 2010 by ESR of New Zealanders' fluoride intake from diet and toothpaste, and a survey of infant and toddler

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<sup>1</sup> National Fluoridation Information Service *Review of Scientific Reviews Relating to Water Fluoridation Published between January 2000 and July 2010* (National Fluoridation Information Service Advisory Wellington 2011). Available at <http://www.rph.org.nz/content/7bb9e0f5-05e2-46b8-b572-1579687f979d.cmr>.



formulae on the New Zealand market. The relevant reports, Cressey P et al 2010 *Estimated Dietary Fluoride Intake for New Zealanders* and Cressey P 2010 *Dietary fluoride intake for fully formula-fed infants in New Zealand: impact of formula and water fluoride*, are referred to in Dr Whyman's affidavit.

#### **Oral Health Surveys in New Zealand**

20. The Ministry has also funded two of the three oral health surveys undertaken in New Zealand. The first survey, funded by the Medical Research Council, took place in 1976. The second national oral health survey, in 1988, was undertaken by the Department of Health. In 2009 the Ministry of Health was the principal sponsor of the *New Zealand Oral Health Survey*, the first nationwide survey in over 20 years to collect information on the oral health status of New Zealand adults and children. The Ministry's report, outlining the key findings of that survey, *Our Oral Health: Key findings of the 2009 New Zealand Oral Health Survey*, is referred to in the affidavit of Dr Whyman.
21. The Community Oral Health Service continues to routinely collect data on the dental health of New Zealand children. The latest report on that data states that in localities where the water supply is fluoridated, children have better oral health outcomes with generally better caries-free rates and a lower average number of decayed, missing and filled primary or permanent teeth across all three identified ethnic groupings (Maori, Pacific and European/other) and in both age groups (age 5 years and Year 8 children).<sup>3</sup>

#### **The Ministry's Support for Fluoridation**

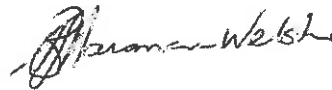
22. Based on the advice the Ministry has received on the benefits of community water fluoridation, the Ministry recognises fluoridation as having benefits for oral health. As a consequence, it actively supports District Councils looking to establish fluoridation systems in their area.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Bates *Fluoridation of water supplies- an evaluation of the recent epidemiological evidence* (Institute of Environmental Science and Research Porirua 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health *Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2012 including the Director-General of Health's Annual Report on the State of Public Health* (Ministry of Health Wellington 2012) on page 188. Available at <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-report-year-ended-30-june-2012>.

23. The Ministry provides councils with information on the benefits of fluoridation and councils can apply to the Ministry for financial assistance with the set-up costs of fluoridation systems. A subsidy of around 50 percent may be provided by the Ministry to contribute to the cost of relevant capital works and up to 100 percent of costs may be covered in special circumstances at the Minister's discretion.
24. The Ministry offered a written submission to the South Taranaki District Council in support of its proposal to fluoridate the Waverley and Patea water supplies, outlining what the Ministry understands to be the current best science on the benefits and risks of fluoridation. The Ministry has provided similar submissions to other local authorities considering fluoridation.



Robyn Jan Haisman-Welsh

AFFIRMED at Wellington this 9<sup>th</sup> day of October 2013 before me:



A Solicitor of the  
High Court of New Zealand

Wendy Jane Lindsay  
Lawyer  
Hayman Lawyers  
Wellington