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21 April 2023

[REDACTED]

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Ref: H2023022609

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 27 March 2023 for information regarding community water fluoridation. Please find a response to each part of your request below:

“Is the Ministry of Health aware of the recent report led by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) that was suppressed by the United States government which found fluoride can reduce IQ?”

Manatū Hauora is aware of the National Toxicology Program (NTP) report. I am advised that the report has not been suppressed but is currently under review. Peer review is a crucial part of the scientific process, and robust analysis is important for it to be able to withstand scientific scrutiny.

“...Please provide all correspondence, minutes of meetings, internal and external memos, including text messages that mention fluoridation and/or fluoride between the Ministry of Health and any other person or agency between the period of January 1, 2023, up until, and including today March 27, 2023.”

Manatū Hauora has corresponded with you between 29 March and 3 April 2023 to refine the scope of this part of your request.

In your email of 30 March 2023, you have confirmed that the scope of your request is as follows:

“1) Please provide all documents, correspondence, minutes of meetings, internal and external memos, including text messages that include fluoridation and/or fluoride between the Ministry of Health and any other person or agency between the period of March 10, 2023, up until, and including today March 30, 2023.

2) With respect to the report led by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) that was suppressed by the United States government regarding water fluoridation, is there consideration for a review of the government's decision to fluoridate our countries water supply?”

As you did not refine your request to official correspondence only, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. I have considered whether changing or extending the time to compile the information would enable us to respond. However, I do not believe it is in the public interest to do so.

Please be aware that including all correspondence that mentions fluoridation and/or fluoride, including emails and text messages, not limited to official correspondence, would require collating thousands of documents. As a significant portion of these are texts and emails, this would also require individual assessment of each piece of correspondence to discern its contents. This would place an unreasonable degree of strain on the team responsible and would interfere with the day-to-day workings of the Ministry. Manatū Hauora is open to responding to this part of your request in the future if you choose to refine your request as stated above.

“When the government approved the use of fluoride in our water supply were any of the following reviews and studies included? If not, why not?”

- ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1104912
- ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-019-0551-x
- pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21255877/
- www.researchgate.net/publication/312057754_Mechanisms_of_Fluoride_Neurotoxicity_A_quick_guide_to_the_literature
- www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147651322008612

In 2014, a comprehensive report was published by the Royal Society Te Apārangi, prepared jointly with the Office of the Prime Minister’s Chief Science Advisor, reviewing the substantial body of scientific evidence on the efficacy and safety of fluoridation of public drinking water supplies. The report concluded that there are no adverse health effects of any significance arising from fluoridation at the levels used in New Zealand.

In June 2021, the Office of the Prime Minister’s Chief Science Advisor released an evidence update on community water fluoridation. The update confirmed that the conclusions of the 2014 report remain appropriate. These reviews are publicly available and can be found at: www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/fluoridation-an-update-on-evidence. You will see that the studies considered are referenced throughout the report and links to further reading and resources are provided.

“With regards to the recent meta-analysis, reviews and lawsuits involving water fluoridation will there be a review of the government's decision to fluoridate our countries water supply? If not, why not?”

The Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Act 2021 requires that before making a direction to fluoridate a drinking water supply, the Director-General of Health is to consider the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of adding fluoride to drinking water in reducing the prevalence and severity of dental decay; and whether the benefits of adding fluoride to drinking water outweigh the costs, taking into account the oral health status and size of the community as well as the financial costs and savings of fluoridation, including ongoing management and monitoring.

“Please disclose what form of fluoride is added to our water supply.”

Drinking water suppliers are responsible for providing safe drinking water to their communities and need to meet the drinking water standards. Drinking water suppliers are responsible for sourcing all of their treatment chemicals (including fluoride) and ensuring product purity. The information you have requested is not held by Manatū Hauora and therefore is refused under section 18(g) of the Act. I have not transferred your request to the suppliers as they are not covered by the Official Information Act. However, if there are particular areas that you are interested in, I recommend that you contact the relevant regional authorities to request the information.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests

Nāku noa, nā



Jane Chambers
Group Manager
Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui