



Cabinet Social Policy Committee

Minute of Decision

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Decision-Making on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water Supplies

Portfolio **Health / Associate Health**

On 30 March 2016, the Cabinet Social Policy Committee:

- 1 **noted** that, in spite of significant improvements in oral health status, New Zealand still has high levels of dental decay;
- 2 **noted** that there is strong evidence for the effectiveness of fluoridation as a means of improving dental health status;
- 3 **noted** that:
 - 3.1 around 2.3 million New Zealanders have access to fluoridated drinking water;
 - 3.2 that this number has not increased over the last 15 years;
 - 3.3 that there is potential to extend coverage to an additional 1.45 million people;
- 4 **agreed** to transfer responsibility for decision-making on fluoridation from territorial local authorities to district health boards (DHBs);
- 5 **noted** that net savings of more than \$600 million over a 20-year period are likely to result from extending fluoridation, with most savings accruing to consumers;
- 6 **noted** that the total direct costs of extending fluoridation to populations not receiving fluoridated water are estimated to be \$144 million over a 20-year period;
- 7 **agreed** that:
 - 7.1 business-as-usual costs should be met from baseline funding of DHBs and the Ministry of Health;
 - 7.2 the direct costs of fluoridation should be met by local authorities;
- 8 **noted** that should local government seek funding from the Crown to meet costs associated with the proposal, this would be subject to future Budget discussions;

- 9 **agreed** to:
- 9.1 amend the Health Act 1956, through the Drinking Water provisions at Part 2A;
 - 9.2 amend the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000,
 - 9.3 consequential amendments required to give effect to the decisions above;
- 10 **agreed** to the inclusion of a bill to give effect to the above decisions in the 2016 Legislative Programme, with a category 5 priority (to be referred to a select committee in 2016);
- 11 **invited** the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health (Hon Peter Dunne) to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the policy decisions;
- 12 **noted** that the submission under SOC-16-SUB-0027 will be proactively released in due course, subject to any material being withheld as necessary if a request for release had been made under the Official Information Act 1982;
- 13 **noted** that the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health (Hon Peter Dunne) intend to release the report of the Sapere Research Group, *Review of the benefits and costs of water fluoridation in New Zealand*, at the appropriate time.
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