

Independent Inquiry into cessation of water fluoridation by Wellington Water

Terms of Reference

- 1 Wellington Water Limited is an infrastructure asset management company that manages the drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services of six councils in the Wellington Region of New Zealand.
- 2 On March 16, 2022 Wellington Water publicly announced that fluoride facilities at Te Marua and Gear Island Water Treatment plants had been turned off in February 2022 due to operational health and safety risks.
- 3 However, the Board of Wellington Water (the Board) subsequently learned that fluoridation was in fact stopped at the Te Marua Water Treatment Plant in May 2021 and at the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant in November 2021.
- 4 As a result, the Board has initiated an independent inquiry into the events that resulted in Wellington Water ceasing fluoridation of drinking water at these two plants and the failure of management to inform the Board, Water Committee and the public of this in an accurate and timely manner.

Objectives

- 5 The objectives of the inquiry are to:
 - a provide the Board with key insights and learnings about these events; and recommend, where appropriate, actions for governance
 - b recommend, where appropriate, actions that will ensure Wellington Water management learns from these events and performs to a high standard in the future.
- 6 Without limiting the scope of the findings and the recommendations, recommendations should include guidance on best management and governance practice if any deficiency emerges in the course of the review.

Governance and approach

- 7 The Board has appointed Doug Martin of MartinJenkins to undertake an independent review on behalf of the Board of Wellington Water.
- 8 Mr Martin will have access to and support from the Chief Executive and staff of Wellington Water. He will be provided with all relevant documentation, and interviews with relevant staff and stakeholders when requested.
- 9 Mr Martin will hold a workshop presenting his draft findings to the Board, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Water Committee.
- 10 Mr Martin is authorised to request and obtain any further documentation from management as he considers necessary for the purposes of this review.
- 11 A draft review report will be made available for comment by individuals impacted by the report.
- 12 Mr Martin will be cognisant of the guidance contained in the *Communications in the pre-election period* from LGNZ and Taituarā.

FINAL IN CONFIDENCE

- 13 The final inquiry report will be presented to the Board of Wellington Water.

Scope

- 14 In the course of the inquiry Mr Martin will:
- a review and, where appropriate, provide recommendations on:
 - i the management of Wellington Water's plants, including asset management, as relevant to the decision to cease fluoridation of drinking water at Te Marua and Gear Island Water Treatment Plants
 - ii the information provided to the Board, and the timeliness of that information, both in the lead up to and regarding the decision to cease fluoridation
 - iii communication with key stakeholders and the public in relation to the decision.
 - b consider the findings of a technical review that management have already commissioned into the operation of the two treatment plants that are the subject of this review.
 - c make comment on any broader systemic matters that he considers relevant to this review.

Engagement with Council Shareholders, Iwi Mana Whenua and Key stakeholders

- 15 Mr Martin should engage with Wellington Water shareholding Councils, Iwi Mana Whenua representatives on the Water Committee, Taumata Arowai and the Ministry of Health regarding communications by Wellington Water on this incident.

Timeframe and reporting

- 16 Mr Martin will report to the Board as follows:
- a in a workshop on key issues and insights during May 2022
 - b in a final report by 31 May 2022.
- 17 Mr Martin will be available to attend the Water Committee meeting where the Board present the final report.