

NORTHLAND DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD

POSITION STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION

JULY 2016

Northland has consistently had one of the country's highest tooth decay rates, especially among children and adolescents with significant ethnic (Māori: non-Māori) oral health inequalities¹. The high rate of tooth decay affects general health and well-being and results in significant costs to the health sector – yet, much of this is potentially preventable.

Community water fluoridation (endorsed by the Ministry of Health)² is considered worldwide as one of the cornerstones of prevention and one of the top ten greatest population-based public health measures in reducing the occurrence of tooth decay^{3,4}. However, Northland remains non-fluoridated after a brief foray into reticulated fluoridation in two Far North communities (Kaitaia and Kaikohe) was abandoned in 2009.

Northland District Health Board (DHB) is committed to taking a lead role in reducing the tooth decay rates and oral health inequalities in the community.

Northland DHB:

1. **Affirms** the Ministry of Health's position on community water fluoridation to provide protection against tooth decay across the whole community.
2. **Supports** community water fluoridation at accepted safe levels being introduced into reticulated drinking water supplies to increase access to fluoridated water.
3. **Agrees** that community water fluoridation of drinking water supplies is the most cost-effective population-based strategy to assist in the prevention of tooth decay in communities of over 800 people.
4. Is **committed** to reducing oral health inequalities through community water fluoridation.
5. **Promotes** awareness and advocates for fluoridating all reticulated water supplies in Northland in collaboration and engagement with Northland Primary Health Organisations (PHO), Iwi health providers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), and other relevant agencies.
6. **Considers** community water fluoridation as an important component of an overall oral health promotion that also includes: twice daily tooth brushing with a fluoridated toothpaste; regular visits to a dental therapist or dentist; reduced consumption of sugars; well-balanced nutrition; fruit and vegetable consumption; breastfeeding of infants; a smokefree environment; and reduced alcohol consumption.

¹ Ministry of Health. (2013). Age 5 and Year 8 oral health data from the School Dental Services. *Oral Health* Retrieved 18th October 2013, from <http://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/oral-health-data-and-stats/age-5-and-year-8-oral-health-data-school-dental-services>.

² Ministry of Health. (2013). Fluoridation. Retrieved 18th October, 2013, from <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/fluoridation>.

³ Petersen, P. E. (2008). World Health Organization global policy for improvement of oral health - World Health Assembly 2007. *International Dental Journal*, 58, 115-121.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Community Water Fluoridation. *Oral Health* Retrieved 13th October, 2013, from <http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.htm>.

