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12 September

Caelen Huntress

By email: caelan@caelanhuntress.com

Ref: H2024049158

Tēnā koe Caelen,

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 15 August 2024. You requested:

*“I would like 5 specific answers, for the 5 specific questions that were asked (and supported with citations and evidence).*

Please see the below for responses to your five questions.

*1. What is the risk-benefit analysis comparing the dental benefits with potential harms from bone cancer(1), thyroid disorders(2), and lowered IQ(3)? How do you quantify the risks vs the rewards?*

Please refer to the Office of the Prime Minister’s Chief Science Advisor’s reports, to find reviews of the scientific evidence relating to community water fluoridation. These reports are publicly available here: [www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/fluoridation-an-update-on-evidence/](http://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/fluoridation-an-update-on-evidence/)

*2. Is there any surveillance in place to monitor cases of fluoride overdose? If not, why not? How many New Zealanders do you expect to suffer adverse health effects?*

Taumata Arowai the drinking water regulator, monitors chemicals against maximum acceptable values (MAVs), including for fluoride. It publishes annual reports which are publicly available here: [www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/about/water-services-insights-and-performance/](http://www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/about/water-services-insights-and-performance/)

*3. Why do you advocate for internal ingestion of fluoride, instead of topical application? Scotland’s Childsmile(4) program brings fluoridated toothpaste, toothbrushes, and hands-on oral hygiene instruction into the classroom. Why do you instead advocate for internal ingestion, when topical application is conclusively shown(5) to be a superior method of delivering this medical treatment?*

*4. Why are the rates of dental decay so similar in non-fluoridated areas? If fluoridation is ‘demonstrably justifiable,’ why does Canterbury (unfluoridated) have similar rates (6,7) of dental decay as Auckland (fluoridated)? The Cochrane Collaboration stated (8) in 2015,*

*“There is insufficient information to determine whether initiation of a water fluoridation programme results in a change in disparities in caries across socioeconomic status (SES) levels.” Do you believe they are wrong?*

5. *Is a decrease of 7 IQ points statistically significant, or not?*

While it is permissible to seek information by asking questions under the Act, a distinction must be drawn between questions which seek information that is ‘held’, and questions which seek to elicit an opinion or explanation. The primary purpose of the Act is to allow requesters to seek information ‘held’ by agencies. It is not a mechanism for requesters to seek an explanation or opinion from an agency. For this reason, I am refusing the above part of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act.

The Ministry provides relevant information on its website at: [www.health.govt.nz/strategies-initiatives/programmes-and-initiatives/oral-health/community-water-fluoridation-policy](http://www.health.govt.nz/strategies-initiatives/programmes-and-initiatives/oral-health/community-water-fluoridation-policy)

The Ministry has also made available the information giving the rationale for the Director-General of Health’s decisions in relation to the directions to fluoridate at: [www.health.govt.nz/information-releases/director-general-of-health-decisions-to-direct-local-authorities-to-fluoridate-drinking-water](http://www.health.govt.nz/information-releases/director-general-of-health-decisions-to-direct-local-authorities-to-fluoridate-drinking-water)

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: [oiagr@health.govt.nz](mailto:oiagr@health.govt.nz).

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](mailto: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](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests)

Nāku noa, nā



Jane Chambers  
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