

10 November 2021

Tēnā koe

This letter is to update you on an important legislative change that promises significant benefits for oral health across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Last night, the Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill (the Bill) passed its final reading. This means that the Bill will come into force 28 days after Royal assent, giving decision-making authority about community water fluoridation to the Director-General of Health.

When the Bill was first introduced to the House in December 2016 it proposed that district health boards be given the authority to direct councils to fluoridate their public drinking water supplies. The landscape has changed since then. The new legislation will ensure consistent, public health-focused decision-making around community water fluoridation.

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, we still have high rates of preventable tooth decay. This is particularly true among Māori, Pacific and those living in deprived communities. As you know, evidence shows that community water fluoridation improves the oral health of everyone and has a proportionately larger benefit for these groups.

Please find attached a factsheet with information about community water fluoridation and links to where to find out more. The [Fluoride Facts website](#) is a good source of information with videos you may like to share with your communities.

The Ministry of Health is working through the detail of how changes enabled by the new legislation will be implemented. We will be engaging with local authorities shortly and expect implementation will be phased over time. We anticipate the Director-General of Health could commence issuing directions to local authorities from mid-2022 onwards. We will provide further information as it becomes available.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work to improve oral health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Ngā mihi nui



Riana Clarke
**National Clinical Director, Oral Health
Ministry of Health**



Barbara Burt
**Manager, Oral Health
Ministry of Health**