

MEDIA RELEASE

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NMDHB response to Community Water Fluoridation public meeting

The NMDHB are aware that a public meeting organised by opponents to community water fluoridation was held over the weekend.

NMDHB Chief Executive Chris Fleming says while the DHB welcomes discussion on the topic, a decision was made not to formally attend the meeting: “We look forward to a respectful community discussion on the topic in due course.”

NMDHB Chairman Jenny Black supports this decision: “We will be considering a formal position on community water fluoridation and any proposed plans in Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough early in the new year.”

Principal Dental Officer Dr Rob Beaglehole says the Board’s position will be guided by the science, which clearly shows that fluoridation is completely safe. “This is why Sir Peter Gluckman, Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, stated in his recent report that it is absolutely clear that at the low doses proposed, there is no risk from fluoride in the water,” he says.

Dr Beaglehole notes there have been some high profile battles over fluoridation recently. Earlier this month the Thames community voted 73 percent in favour of maintaining community water fluoridation.

“The anti-fluoridation lobby represents a vocal minority opposed to a safe, practical, health initiative that is supported by most of the community. They are a well funded lobby group that pushes questionable science in the face of hard facts,” says Dr Beaglehole. “Fluoride Free Nelson’s umbrella organisation Fluoride Free NZ has constantly been caught misrepresenting the facts by the Advertising Standards Authority – most recently with a complaint upheld over false advertising in the Thames referendum.”

Dr Beaglehole adds that many scientific studies and over five decades of experience in a number of countries around the world have shown that community water fluoridation is safe and effective. It’s also seen by many in public health as a key way to reduce social inequality.

“What we know from comparison with other communities in New Zealand, is that if Nelson introduced community water fluoridation we would see a reduction in pain and suffering caused by tooth decay,” says Dr Beaglehole. “We’d see an approximate 40 percent drop in new tooth decay

amongst kids and 30 percent in adults with most of the benefits occurring in our lower socio-economic communities.”

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