

Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill

Third Reading

Legislative Statement

The Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill

The Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill (the Bill) amends the Health Act 1956 by inserting a power for the Director-General of Health to make decisions and give directions about the fluoridation of local government drinking water supplies in their areas. This power replaces local authorities' decision-making responsibilities about fluoridation of drinking water.

The Bill requires the Director-General of Health to consider the scientific evidence of the effectiveness of fluoridation in reducing dental decay, and whether the benefits outweigh the financial costs. The Director-General must also consider the oral health status (or likely oral health status) of the community or population group associated with the supply, the size of the water supply and how much it's likely to cost to introduce fluoridation.

Before issuing any direction to fluoridate, the Director-General of Health must seek written comment from the local authorities on the estimated cost of introducing community water, and the date by which the local authority could comply.

Transferring decision-making to the Director-General of Health is expected to enable extended fluoridation coverage, which would improve the status of oral health in New Zealand. It also aligns with the Government's expectation of strong central public health leadership and sector stewardship.