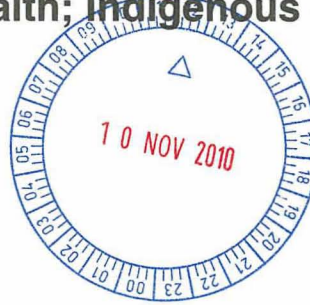




PUBLIC

**Deputy Premier of Western Australia
Minister for Health; Indigenous Affairs**

Our Ref: 25-15936



RECEIVED

02 NOV 2010

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000


Dear Mr Ellis

Thank you for your letter of 14 October 2010 seeking advice in relation to the petition about the proposed chlorination of Busselton's water supply.

I appreciate that the petitioners are concerned about aspects of the Busselton Water Board's decision to chlorinate that community's drinking water supply. The Board's decision was not made lightly, as it is aware of, and responsible for, the provision of safe drinking water to the Busselton community.

I understand that, to date, the Busselton Water Board has been able to use ultraviolet light disinfection to control microbiological contamination. This was only possible as the source of water has been microbiologically sound and the distribution system from bore to consumer was very short. Ultraviolet light disinfection systems can only treat water as it passes the equipment. There is no residual biocide in the water to protect it from subsequent contamination while it is in transit to the consumer's tap.

As Busselton has grown, the drinking water distribution system has become more complex, and the risk of a barrier breach and contamination has also increased. While faecal indicator organisms, such as E.coli have not been detected in the water supply for many years, Naegleria species have been continually isolated from a number of locations throughout the distribution system (the most recent involving three locations sampled on 12 October 2010). The ongoing isolation of Naegleria spp. demonstrates the vulnerability of the community's drinking water distribution system to contamination and microbiological colonisation after UV treatment.

I am also concerned that the isolation of *Naegleria* spp. clearly demonstrates that there is a real risk that the community's drinking water distribution system can be colonised by *Naegleria fowleri*. *Naegleria fowleri* is strictly waterborne and although cases are rare, when they occur they are usually fatal.

With this in mind, I understand it is necessary to take action to protect public health by introducing a residual biocide into the Busselton drinking water distribution system. A number of residual water treatment options exist for the Board to consider. However, chlorination is simple, effective and the most commonly used water disinfection system used by the drinking water industry around the world.

I support and commend the Busselton Water Board on its decision to review and improve the level of public health protection that will be given to the Busselton community, and support their decision to chlorinate the drinking water supply.

Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Richard Theobald, Manager, Water Unit, Department of Health, on 9388 4967.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kim Hames', written in a cursive style.

Dr Kim Hames MLA
DEPUTY PREMIER
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

- 1 NOV 2010