

14 March 2013

David Hammond  
Chief Executive  
Thames-Coromandel District Council  
Private Bag  
THAMES 3540

Dear Mr Hammond

### **Moanataiari Contaminated Land**

Thank you for your further letter of 4 March 2013, advising that Council proposes to use the Ministry's pamphlet, *Arsenic and Health*, as the basis of its awareness programme, and I reiterate my earlier agreement for your Council to reprint the pamphlet for the campaign.

I would like to correct a misconception that seems to be being perpetuated about the drinking-water standards. As has been previously explained to Council staff, the disparity between the level of risk in standards for drinking-water and the National Environmental Standard is because the World Health Organisation accepts a higher level of risk for drinking-water. This is because the resulting value is at the practical level for arsenic removal with drinking-water treatment systems, is close to the level of detection in water, and many communities world-wide do not have choices in their source of drinking-water. As there is no absolute safe level for exposure to arsenic, a conservative approach was taken when setting the levels in New Zealand's National Environmental Standard for soils to ensure that the exposure to arsenic from all sources is as low as possible.

With regard to your comments on the Hamilton drinking-water supply and the lack of 'push' to remediate that water supply, Hamilton has a modern efficient drinking-water treatment plant which not only produces drinking-water with arsenic levels below the New Zealand Drinking-water Standards (based on World Health Organisation Guidelines), but produces drinking-water with average levels of arsenic at about 20% of the drinking-water standards. Clearly Hamilton is more than meeting the need to reduce arsenic in its water supply and protecting public health risks from that source.

As you have noted, Ministry of Health officials will continue to support Dr Hood and her colleagues to provide advice on managing the public health risks from contaminated soil in Moanataiari. If there was to be no permanent soil remediation, the current health risks persist and our advice (contained in *Arsenic and Health*) remains unchanged.

Yours sincerely



Dr Mark Jacobs  
Director of Public Health  
Clinical Leadership, Protection and Regulation



CC: Dr Dell Hood, Medical Officer of Health, Waikato District Health Board  
Bruce Croucher, Ministry for the Environment