Video: Safer Drinking Water

Bill Bayfield:

Tēnā koutou katoa, ko Bill Bayfield ahau, ko te kaiwhakahaere o Taumata Arowai ahau. As Kiwis, we pride ourselves in having safe, clean drinking water but that’s not always the case.

Every year, some 34,000 people get sick drinking from their taps. I am joined by Michael Petherick from Te Tari Taiwhenua to talk about the changes the Government has made to ensure we all have safe drinking water.

Michael Petherick:

He tika tāu; that’s right Bill. Every New Zealander deserves safe and reliable drinking water. So, what are we doing about it? You know, the first steps are already well underway. Lots of our water supplies don’t meet the New Zealand water quality standards. The Government’s just passed a new law to guarantee this. It’s a basic right kiwis deserve! Over the last few years, we’ve also been working with Bill to set up Taumata Arowai, the independent drinking water regulator. Bill and his team are putting in the mahi to keep you safe. But Bill, will you be treating every drinking water supply the same?

Bill Bayfield:

No Michael, my team has to live in the real world. We know that while the goal of safe and reliable drinking water is the same for everyone, how we get there needs to work for all our different communities.

Michael Petherick:

Too right Bill. That’s actually something we heard a lot about when this new law was going through Parliament, so we made some changes, to help Taumata Arowai take a ‘risk-based approach’.

Bill Bayfield:

That’s right. If you take our priority of drinking water, some supplies are more risky than others. For example, if something goes wrong in a big town supply, a lot of people get sick. Remember Havelock North? More than 5000 people got sick and four died from one contamination event. We’re going to work with these big supplies over the next year to make sure that they are meeting the drinking water standards. If you’re in a small or rural community that’s not on a council supply, It’s important that you are safe.

But we are going to take more time to work with you, to make sure the solutions we are putting in place, work for you. These small community supplies will have four years to work with us and then to register with us. We will then work with you over the next three years to make sure that your drinking water is safe for all of your friends, your whānau and community.

Michael Petherick:

Thanks Bill. We’ve also heard a lot about the importance of three waters lately. I know you’ve just talked about your drinking water focus, but something we heard really clearly from the public through the select committee process of this new law was the importance of wastewater and stormwater quality. What are you guys going to do there?

Bill Bayfield:

Well, we are going to work with Regional Councils, who are directly regulating this, to make sure what we’re putting back into our environments, meets the quality our wai deserves. This is about shining a light on performance and upholding Te Mana o Te Wai. For us, that means being able together with Regional Councils, show you, as the communities who play in and work off these waterways, that we are treating them well, and keeping our wai safe and clean.

Michael Petherick:

Thanks Bill, this is a really important kaupapa for all New Zealanders no matter where they live. This is a great step forward!

Both:

Kia ora tatou. Kia ora.