

Petition: Officers' Response

Title: "Say 'No' to water meters"

"We the undersigned recognise that water is a necessity of life, and therefore a basic human right – not a commodity to be traded for commercial interests. Accordingly, we call on our elected representatives in local, regional and national government to:

- reject water metering as a method of domestic water management
- promote and subsidise alternative technologies that enable the collection and use of rainwater and greywater
- support publicly-controlled, not-for-profit management and conservation of our water resources."

Primary Petitioner: Wellington Resident's Coalition

Total Signatures: 18,000

Presented by: Ron Oliver (WRC Chair), Warwick Taylor (WRC Treasurer), Alison Robbins (WRC Secretary), Roma Parker, Jocelyn Brooks, Kieran Taylor, Maria Van der Meel and Wendy Poste

Contact officer: Paul Glennie,
Director responsible: Stavros Michael

Officers' recommendation:

Officers recommend that the Committee:

1. *Receive the petition*
2. *Agree to refer the petition to Officers to inform their work.*
3. *Note that a report will be presented to SPC on 1 March 2011 that will include a response to the areas raised by this petition.*

Background:

This petition 'Say 'No' to water meters' was initiated by Wellington Resident's Coalition (WRC) largely in response to media reports that Council was considering the universal use of water meters¹. The petition commenced on 14 February 2009 and concluded in October 2010.

The purpose of the petition is to gather support that shows the level of opposition to the use of water meters as a method of 'domestic water

¹ *Calls to talk about metering Wellington's water* - Dominion Post 27 November 2009

management', the level of support for Council to promote and subsidise alternative technologies (such as rainwater and greywater collection/reuse) and indicate support for publically-controlled and managed conservation of water resources

The petition was presented to Wellington residents via public meetings, events (suburban fairs etc) and also with volunteers collecting signatures. WRC advise that 17,988 signatures have been collected.

Officers' response:

Although this petition has been the initiative of WRC and does not directly reflect on a project, policy or strategy being prepared by Council there are overlaps with the 'Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan' report that was presented to SPC in June 2010.

With the information provided to date it does not appear to be possible to assess whether signatories could, or have, indicated a position on each of the three statements.

Based on the information to hand regarding the petition the following has been considered:

Calling on elected officials to '*reject water metering as a method of domestic water management*' the petition overlooks, or disregards the potential for accurately measuring domestic consumption as a management tool.

There are a number of considerations that will need to be addressed in assessing the viability of using water meters as a demand management tool. Primarily the cost of installing meters across the city needs to be balanced against the benefit returned versus other options such as educational resources about conservation and efficiency, promoting and/or subsidising water efficient technologies, the collection of rainwater for outside use or the recycling of greywater (to cite but a few).

The call for elected officials to '*promote and subsidise alternative technologies that enable the collection and use of rainwater and greywater*' sit firmly within the Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan' mentioned above. This also requires further cost/benefit analysis in conjunction with submissions received but is amongst the options to be considered in managing the city's water demand.

With regards to '*supporting publicly-controlled, not-for-profit management and conservation of our water resources*' there has been no suggestion made by Council that it would move away from this premise.

A report on the Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan is to be considered by Councillors at a meeting on 1 March 2011. Accordingly it is proposed that additional information regarding water meters and the promotion/subsidisation of alternative technologies be covered in that paper.

**Paul Glennie
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