

13 March 2009

Frank Cook
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Dear Mr Cook

Thank you for your letter received on 27 February 2009 in which you gave your reasons for not wanting to meet at this stage. I have met with Council officers and looked into the points raised by your original letter. Please find the following response to the points raised and questions asked. I have used your numbering where possible for the response.

2.1 With regard to the article in the Dominion Post on 27 November 2008, the information relating to the water used by Wellingtonians each day is not that of Wellington City residents. Instead, the writer of the article has quoted the figure for the gross daily use per capita for the Wellington Region, including Porirua, Hutt City and Upper Hutt.

2.2 The figure of 440 litres per person daily, as stated in the 'Positioning for the Future' document is the amount of water purchased daily per capita. This figure was reached by dividing the daily gross water purchase by the population of Wellington City. This total includes industrial and business use, and unaccounted for water.

2.3 The Annual Plan figure of 450 litres coupled with the statement that consumption is increasing is misleading, and could be viewed as being pessimistic. The figure quoted includes skewing attributed to the large leak discovered outside the hospital in Newtown. The statement about increasing consumption is in reference to the total water consumption in Wellington City.

The consumption can be seen to change depending on the requirements of Wellington Hospital, Port of Wellington and other industry. An increase will also be seen during a particularly hot or dry season/year. Taylor Preston's alone uses an average of 4.3% of the water purchased by Wellington City.

2.4 There is an error on the Wellington City Council website. The reported annual water usage of about 17.5 billion litres is incorrect. The amount supplied to Wellington City for the year ending 30 June 2008 was almost 30 billion litres. This is being corrected, as is the statement about usage per person daily of 500 litres.

3.1 You are correct when you state that there needs to be better information around whether a figure relates to gross or domestic usage. Not having a uniform reporting 'style' makes accurate reporting and comparisons with other local bodies difficult. This can be compounded by the use of non-standard or difficult unit abbreviations. Recommendations are being made regarding clarification of published figures and units in future reports and plans. Where possible, I have used litres per capita per day (lcd) in this letter.

While domestic use figures may be more beneficial to the ratepayers, so that they can see how consumption is faring for them, gross usage is more useful for the Council when it comes to analysing trends and for forecasting.

3.2.1 The publication 'Positioning for the Future' states that Wellingtonians use twice as much water as Upper Hutt residents. This statement is incorrect. It was reached by comparing the daily gross water purchase for Wellington City (440 litres) with the domestic usage of Upper Hutt residents (227 litres).

3.2.2 It is hard to see where the statement about Wellington residents' consumption being twice that of Auckland residents originated. The daily gross water purchase for Wellington is one and a half times higher than that of Greater Auckland's daily gross water usage.

3.2.3 As with the Auckland figure, the statement that Nelson's usage is about one third of Wellington City's is incorrect. The daily gross water purchase for Wellington is two and a half times higher than that of Nelson's daily domestic water usage.

3.3 The water consumption information reported in the Quality of Life Report 2007 is incorrect. This discrepancy appears to be the result of the analysis undertaken by the Quality of Life team. Officers have reviewed the water consumption data that was provided by Wellington City Council to the Quality of Life project team, and can confirm that this information was accurate. The water consumption information provided was measured in litres/person/year.

It seems the error occurred during analysis by the Quality of Life team. The water consumption data for Wellington has not been calculated to a per day figure in line with other Territorial Authority figures. The litres per year data has somehow lost three decimal places and stated as litres per capita per day. For the year 2005/06, the average annual usage was 165,400 litres per capita. Divided by 365 days, the daily average is 453 litres per capita. A note of this error has been made and passed to the Quality of Life project team.

I cannot comment on whether the figures for the other centres are correct.

3.3.1 As stated in 2.4, this figure is wrong and is being corrected.

3.4 The origins of the statements in the Dominion Post article on 27 November 2008, concerning Wellingtonians' reckless consumption and that the usage is twice the national average, are not known.

3.4.1 The figure quoted in the same article for the national average daily usage of 160 litres was not provided by Wellington City Council.

4.0 The reported figures for water loss include all water that is not used by metered and unmetered but official connections to the reticulated water supply. This figure is reached by calculating the unmetered consumption, which when added to the metered consumption, can be subtracted from the total bought by Wellington City from Greater Wellington. As all industry and commercial water users, save for some of those using residential amounts, are metered, the unmetered usage is calculated at a residential daily rate of 230 litres per capita. (page 2 of 'Water Consumption figures for Wellington City' – appendix 1)

The unaccounted for water (UFW), besides leaks also includes the following usages:

- Flushing hydrants
- Fire-fighting use
- Burst mains
- Reservoir overflows

Unmetered commercial usage (too small to be economic to meter on a cost of meter versus cost of water basis)

Un-metered council garden/park watering
Street cleaning

There is a new international industry standard for calculating system leakage (International Leakage Indicator), used by Capacity in place of percentage of Unaccounted for Water (%UFW). %UFW is still used as an overall indicator of sustainability (appendix 2 shows that the %UFW has decreased from 27% in 2002/05 to 21% in 2007/08).

The target, set in the 'Water Conservation Strategies' report in 1995, of reducing unaccounted for water loss to 12% by 2005 was found to not be economically viable. However, by setting a challenging target, it enabled the Council to better assess the position that it was in, compared with if it had set an easily achievable goal that did not encourage work and investigation.

The system is being constantly monitored for signs of leakages, so that these can be confined and repaired in the shortest possible time. This is done by monitoring sector meters for abnormal usage, which can then be traced and repaired. We are also requesting property owners to take responsibility for leaks from private pipes.

Conclusion

The main point to be drawn from this investigation is that the figures quoted by Local Bodies and other agencies need careful analysis before they can be assessed against one another. Much of this requirement could be achieved by the universal adoption of standardised reporting, both in terms of figures and units.

As indicated earlier, recommendations are being made, within Wellington City Council, to undertake this standardisation and to improve clarity for ratepayers. For example, where domestic usage figures are used, this should be stated and the units used should also be explained.

Your report has been valuable in providing information to help with the recommendations to Council officers and to point out where communication with ratepayers needs to be improved.

Incidentally, investigating your report led me to another error, this time in the Annual Report 07/08 in which the amount of water used in the region daily would fill WestPac Stadium. This should have been read as the weekly usage.

The other information you requested, in your original letter, relates to the water used by Wellington City Council itself.

Wellington City Council has a total of 371 connections to the reticulated water supply. Of this total, 146 are metered:

K1	Commercial - City Centre with a water meter	17
S1	Base - Full services with a water meter	34
S2	50% Non rateable - with a water meter	2
S4	Base - Full services with a water meter (multi)	7
S5	100% Non rateable - Full services & a water meter	39
S6	50% Non rateable - with a water meter	13
S8	100% Non rateable - with a water meter	10
T1	Commercial - Suburban with a water meter	23
T4	Commercial - Suburban with a water meter (multi)	1

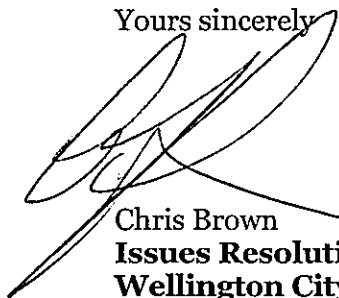
The total usage for the above 146 metered connections for 2007/08 was 520,767,000 litres (over 520 million litres).

Using the figure of 230 lcd stated in 4.0, the usage for the remaining 225 Council water connections can be estimated at 18.89 million litres per year (This however assumes that there is only one person using each connection and as such will be a low estimate. It is prohibitively difficult to work out the number of people, or equivalent site usage for each of these connections).

Adding the two figures together, though, does give a total of almost 540 million litres used by the Council in the year 2007/08.

If you have any further questions, please contact me. Infrastructure and Capacity representatives are keen to meet with you if you wish to do so.

Yours sincerely



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