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**A comparison of the microbiological quality of
drinking-water of urban and semi-urban dwellings in
the Richmond district of New Zealand**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Environmental Health Science
at
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

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2013

Abstract

This study aimed to determine if residents of Richmond, Nelson, with an on-demand, mains pressure, and metered drinking-water supply had the same microbiological drinking-water quality at the kitchen tap as dwellings with a restricted, low-flow supply. Both dwelling types were supplied with water from the same untreated, reticulated water supply scheme. The results from this study provide information for both consumers and the supplier regarding the microbiological quality of drinking-water supplied at the kitchen tap.

A cross-sectional, interviewer administered survey of 50 dwellings with a metered supply and 61 dwellings with a restrictor supply was conducted during May-July 2012. Microbiological water quality of each dwelling was ascertained by testing water samples from the kitchen tap for the presence of indicator organisms, using the Colilert®-18 method.

When total coliforms were used as an indicator, metered dwellings did not have the same water quality as restrictor-only dwellings ($p < 0.0005$): more restrictor-only dwellings were contaminated than metered dwellings. Drinking-water at the kitchen tap for 84% of metered dwellings and 48% of restrictor-only dwellings complied with the microbiological criteria set in the DWSNZ 2005 (Revised 2008) of < 1 total coliform per 100 ml. When *E.coli* was used as an indicator, metered dwellings were found to have the same water quality as restrictor-only dwellings ($p = 0.242$). Drinking-water for all metered dwellings and 94% of restrictor-only dwellings complied with the microbiological criteria set in the DWSNZ 2005 (Revised 2008) of < 1 *E.coli* per 100 ml. Supplementing the reticulated water supply with water from another source was undertaken by 18% of participants with a restrictor supply and it appeared to cause a reduction in the microbiological quality of drinking-water.

The results for *E.coli* have demonstrated that it is possible to provide a potable supply of drinking-water from an untreated, reticulated supply to dwellings with either a metered or a restrictor-only supply. The total coliform results indicated that there might be issues with the use of restrictor drinking-water supplies, in particular the use of private water storage systems. Owners of restrictor supplies need to be provided with more information on the set-up, design, and maintenance of these water storage systems.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Stan Abbott and Dr. Barry Palmer, for their invaluable guidance and assistance with this research project. An extra big thank you also goes to Stan for organising all of the laboratory equipment, for responding to all of my queries, and for being so enthusiastic about this project.

Thanks also go to the following people:

- Dr. Gillian Bullock, Water Scientist, MWH New Zealand Ltd, for providing me with information about the Richmond water supply and for taking the time to answer all my questions
- Dr. John Heath, Senior tutor in Health sciences, Massey University, for his assistance with the statistics in this project
- Jim Graham, Principal Environmental Scientist, Opus International Consultants Ltd, for explaining parts of the legislation and Standards relating to water supplies that I didn't understand
- Dr. Linda Liddicoat, Research Consultant, for help with using SPSS
- Evan Mackenzie, Drinking Water Assessor, Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, for providing background information on the Richmond water supply.
- Jeff Cuthbertson, Utilities Asset Manager, for ensuring that all the resources that I needed from the Tasman District Council were made available to me
- All of the participants who took part in this study. Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions and for making me so welcome in your homes.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my husband and children for the understanding, love, and support that they have given me whilst I have worked on this thesis. I could not have completed this thesis without your help.

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