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Media Release  
For immediate release  
29 January 2019

The Kawerau District Council has put a temporary halt to chlorinating the town water supply from today, while it looks for a way to resolve issues with water discolouration. Since chlorination began in July last year, there has been sporadic yellow to brown discolouration of the town's tap water. Although safe to drink, chlorine in the water pipes has caused staining from natural manganese in the water and dislodged bacterial material which had built up in the system over many years.

Council decided to start using chlorine following the Havelock North water contamination which made more than 5000 people sick. The report of the Government Inquiry into the contamination recommended that chlorine was the only way to ensure the safety of reticulated drinking water supplies. Kawerau had previously used UV treatment, which does not provide continuous disinfection of water. This left the water at risk of being re-contaminated by E.coli and other bacteria once it entered the reticulation system. As a result, Kawerau had experienced some low level E.coli contaminations and was not compliant with NZ drinking water standards on those occasions.

To resolve the discolouration issue, Council will flush the whole reticulation network and trial cleaning the pipes by air scouring. Once the discolouration has been solved, Council will revisit chlorinating the water supply to meet the drinking water standards.

ENDS

For further information please contact:  
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