

Report **04.528**
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Committee **Utility Services**
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Water Conservation Promotion - Summer 2005

1. Purpose

To advise the Committee of developments in the planning for Greater Wellington's summer water conservation campaign 2005.

2. Background

A report (Report 04.347) and attachment covering Greater Wellington's recent water demand management initiatives and giving a broad outline of future direction was presented to the Committee on 22 June 2004. That report provides a full background to our summer water conservation activity.

To summarise, water supply infrastructure is typically designed to accommodate the maximum anticipated peaks in supply. High levels of garden watering on top of normal indoor water use is the primary cause of maximum peak day demands each year. The population that we supply is increasing and our system is approaching its design capacity, given the security of supply standard agreed with our customers. Reducing garden water demand peaks by voluntary action will postpone the need for more restrictive watering bylaws and/or expansion of system capacity. Supply on very high peak days tends to be the most expensive water due to power price structures, so reducing peaks will help to hold down costs within the capacity of the current system. Lower water use also reduces the environmental impact of supplying water.

Since 1997/98, Greater Wellington Water has run an annual campaign to raise awareness about the relationship between water supply and demand during summer and to promote a range of water conservation measures in a two-month period from early January. This programme has targeted both immediate behaviour change and the maintenance of more water-efficient gardening behaviour over time. The actions promoted via Greater Wellington's recent campaigns have primarily addressed gardeners with professional garden-friendly advice that aims to increase water use efficiency, rather than asking gardeners to use less water without regard for the health of their plants. Our water supply customers endorsed the campaign strategy and tactics at its inception and have continued to support this activity as a worthwhile contribution to managing demand.

3. Water Conservation Communications – Summer 2005

The strategy followed in recent years – to address gardeners about the use of water for garden irrigation during mid summer – will be retained.

It is proposed to update our communications material and the methods used to communicate with gardeners. This update will reflect the findings of our most recent research about water use and attitudes about water conservation, and recognise Greater Wellington's strategic communications development since January 2003 – particularly the 'Be the Difference' social marketing campaign.

Greater Wellington's Strategic Communications Manager has been consulted about campaign development possibilities and Clemenger BBDO – the Council's communications advisors for the 'Be the Difference' programme - has since been briefed to develop a communication proposal for water conservation for the coming summer. The campaign will build on the communication of water-wise gardening actions that we have undertaken in recent years and will also link into 'Be the Difference'. Strategic Communications will be kept involved as the campaign is developed further.

Clemengers has been asked to present a campaign proposal by 17 September. The following guidance has been provided to them.

3.1 Campaign Aim

To reduce garden water demand relative to climate conditions and avoid excessive peak days by reaching gardeners who are predisposed to conserving water but don't usually act on water-wise gardening advice and encouraging them to adopt more water-wise behaviours. We want to elicit voluntary behaviour change that will be continued in future years.

The communication programme is for use this summer. We expect that it could be readily re-used and extended in future years.

3.2 Timing

Peak water use typically occurs between early January and the end of February. Except under very wet conditions the campaign should be visible during this period. On days when water use is high, early to mid evening sees the highest levels of water use per minute. We have asked that Clemengers consider the practicalities of concentrating some part of our activity around this time of day.

3.3 Audience

Effective water-wise behaviour requires a combination of fairly simple measures. Against that, it is difficult to demonstrate tangible personal rewards for adopting these behaviours (time or dollars saved, inconvenience of tougher watering restrictions avoided, a healthier local environment). The challenge is to motivate people sufficiently to overcome their objections to change (largely

lack of time, hassle and cost) in a typical summer, so that water-wise behaviour becomes the norm and not simply a short-term response in difficult years.

Gardeners can be divided into those who believe that water conservation is worthwhile and those who don't. The majority of gardeners don't see garden watering as a major use of water, but around 40 percent believe conservation to be worthwhile and recognise that they could do more themselves to lower their water use for gardening. Details about their watering habits - particularly the use of portable sprinklers – suggest that a worthwhile reduction in water use is possible from these gardeners.

Clemengers have been briefed to focus on reaching this group, as they appear the most likely among the population of gardeners to respond positively to water-wise incentives and advice. They would also appear to be good prospects to join the wider 'Be the Difference' programme.

The current members of 'Be the Difference' are likely to be relatively supportive of our call for action. Water-wise advice in a form that is appropriate for this audience will form part of the total campaign.

3.4 Probable Key Messages

Two of the widely held beliefs about garden watering – that it doesn't use much water compared to indoor use during summer and that any water used for gardening isn't wasted - appear to be significant barriers to greater effort to conserve garden water. Without wanting to pre-empt Clemengers' impending proposal, these beliefs are likely to be addressed by the campaign's central call for action.

A greater level of detail around why water conservation is worthwhile in our supply area and how to water wisely will be made available to those who want to take action as a result of our advertising. What form this will take is yet to be decided, but use of Greater Wellington's web site and a brochure are likely to feature.

3.5 Flexibility To Respond To Actual Conditions

Water supply conditions and the level of water use in our supply area can change quite quickly and these changes are difficult to predict with a high degree of accuracy. Television has been the main channel of communication in recent years for its ability to get our message in front of a large audience of gardeners. However, scheduling deadlines for television make it impractical to adapt the message or level of activity at short notice. We have requested that Clemengers' proposal incorporate use of communication channels that provide some flexibility to adapt our campaign at fairly short notice, to reflect actual weather and demand conditions. We have also requested that we be able to cancel part of our activity – again at short notice - in the event of a very poor summer, without significant financial penalty. The exact combination of communication channels to be used this summer has yet to be determined.

4. Customer Support

Informally there is customer support for a shift away from television advertising to communication channels that allow greater flexibility to respond to actual weather conditions. A detailed proposal of communications activity for summer 2005 will be presented to the water supply managers of our customers following our consideration of the proposal being developed by Clemengers.

5. Communications

There is no communication opportunity arising from this paper.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee receives the report and notes its contents

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