SUBMISSION

NZ GOVERNMENT ‘ACTION FOR HEALTHY WATERWAYS’ PROPOSALS

CleanSwim Auckland was formed in 2018 by a group of ocean swimmers who were concerned about the levels of polluted Stormwater and/or polluted waterways being discharged to the sea, degrading sea water quality and restricting the ability to swim in the sea at many Auckland beaches.

CleanSwim Auckland has been working with the Auckland Council’s Safeswim to endeavour to fast track initiatives to stop pollutants entering the sea that exceed the maximum level of ‘280 enterococci/100 ml.’ (The standard adopted by Auckland Council Safeswim, based on the June 2003 - Ministry for the Environment ‘Microbiological Water Quality’ Guidelines.)

CleanSwim Auckland specifically supports the following point from the Government Action for Healthy Waterways Plan:

- Set higher standards for swimming in places New Zealanders swim in summer.

The Action for Healthy Waterways Plan is predominantly focused on the value of our freshwater rivers and lakes that are being impacted by pollutants generated by human activity.

Management of stormwater and wastewater is mentioned in the Proposal in the context of stopping things getting worse and improving freshwater health in a generation. CleanSwim Auckland believes that New Zealanders need to do better than fixing the problems in a generation and agrees with the aim of the Plan to achieve a noticeable improvement in 5 years, which is needed to provide solutions that will protect the health and safety of all New Zealanders.

CleanSwim Auckland has advocated for more than two years that swimming in the sea is a long-standing birthright for Aucklanders and that the Auckland Council Safeswim Plan to ‘clean-up’ Auckland beaches in 10 years is simply an unacceptable time to wait for beaches to be swimmable for 95% of the time.

Pollution problems at Auckland beaches, based on the most recent Auckland Council Safeswim data available for the year ending 30 April 2018, highlight that:

- 84 Auckland beaches had no-swim red alerts for an average of 23% of the available summer days
- Takapuna beach was closed for swimming for more than 30% of the available summer days
- There were sampled discharges from three stormwater drain outlets at Takapuna beach where the pollution levels exceeded the maximum levels recommended by the Ministry for the Environment ‘Microbiological Water Quality’ Guidelines by more than 160, 360 and 430 times for the three samples, all significantly greater than allowable

It could well be that polluted Stormwater and/or polluted waterways from Urban sources, that are being discharged to the sea, is actually a worse problem than the current pollution impacts being experienced in freshwater rivers and lakes.

Recommendations

CleanSwim Auckland recommends that Government Regulates maximum pollution levels, for all discharges to the sea at New Zealand beaches, to ensure that:

- Pollutant discharges to the sea are controlled to ensure that beaches are swimmable for 95% of the time;
- The Government Action for Healthy Waterways Plan provides the same level of scrutiny for Urban sourced pollutants being discharged to the sea, to the current level of scrutiny aimed at protecting the value of our freshwater rivers and lakes.

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