

Public Meeting Your Water and Asset Sales

Will you have to pay yet another bill?

At a time when we are facing increasing living costs, we may have to start paying another bill for the amount of water we use. The government intends to give ownership of our water supply assets to Wellington Water. They have made continual demands for water meters so that they can charge for water use by volume.

Despite public opposition, many local body politicians support them, from Daran Ponter Wellington Regional Council chair, to Nicola Young, longstanding city councillor. The Council endorses volumetric charging for water on its website. It has refused to entertain a petition opposing that prior to the last election.

Airport shares and ground leases – should they be for sale?

The Council has also voted to consult on selling its 34% shareholding in Wellington Airport and its ground leases.

What do you think of these proposals? What can we all do about them?

Public Meeting (followed by the Annual General of Wellington Residents Coalition)

Newtown Hall, Corner Constable and Daniell Streets

2pm Sunday 28th January 2024

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven...

Campbell Barry (Labour mayor of Lower Hutt, Chair Wellington Water Committee) says the region has no choice but to install residential water meters (as quoted in The Post).

Daran Ponter (Labour Regional Council chair): “We can’t build our way out of this crisis”, meters are the first step in reducing water use (as quoted in The Post).

Listen very closely and you can hear it – **TINA, TINA** – the mating call of the magenta crested neo-liberal coming to screw you.

TINA was their call in the 80s – THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE.

There is always an alternative.

If water meters are introduced, and they reduce water use, will the rich who can afford what they need use less? Or will poorer people use less?

Water meters will help turn poorer citizens into the great unwashed completing the neo-liberal dream of entrenched poverty.

Water is our last little bit of socialism. Labour Prime Minister Walter Nash said that socialism was “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”. At present, all people in the region can use the water they need, and those who are well off pay more because water is paid for by property rates based on property valuation.

The facts are not discussed in the local media's page after page devoted to regurgitating Wellington Water PR spin. They do not explain how 320,000 people used 162 million litres of water a day in 1990 and there was no leak crisis or water shortage, and 410,000 people today in the region use about the same amount of water but 44% is lost in leaks and there is a water shortage and leak crisis.

The magenta crested neo-liberals want to spend \$300 million on installing water meters. That would be spent before even one drop of water is saved. What else could be done with \$300 million?

1. **Control the water pressure in the mains.** Large areas have excess water pressure which increases the amount of leaks. The current system is: Put the reservoir on the top of the hill. Make sure the rich who live there for the views get the water pressure they need. Let gravity do its thing (increase the pressure) and cause leaks at the bottom of the hill.
2. **Provide a service to householders to conserve water.** Currently, lateral sewerage pipes in private land in Wellington are fixed by Wellington Water. Why not water pipes too? A large private leak costs about \$1800 to fix. Fixing all private leaks up to the house would cost far less than the interest bill on a borrowed \$300 million. Check the water pressure reducing valves in residents' homes. Is there one? Is it broken? In areas of high pressure a household water pressure reducing valve can save a large amount of water use. The cost per household? \$400.
3. **Collect rainwater.** The new convention centre collects rainwater and this supplies the building's toilets. Why not require the same for all new builds and encourage the same on existing properties, particularly those with gardens?
4. **Fix the leaks.** Wellington Water fixed 8000 leaks in the last year. The Regional Council in its last year of fixing leaks fixed 10,700 for Wellington City only. Contracting out has resulted in insufficient trained people to get the job done. Bring back direct employment and train the numbers required.
5. **Encourage water conservation.** Some people do waste water. Educate people about water conservation. Front loaded washing machines, for example, use a lot less water than top loaded. The use of water efficient appliances could be promoted and their use supported by interest free loans that are repaid with rates.

Just because they have water meters in Kapiti does not make that the best or most cost effective. Lets start thinking creatively about issues rather than simply following what we are told is "best industry practice". It would be a lot cheaper, and fairer.

... it is not a commodity

Wellington Residents Coalition 126 Vivian St Wellington