



caring about you & your environment

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Report to Utility Services Committee
from Andrew Samuel, Marketing Analysis Manager

2000/2001 Summer Water Conservation Campaign

1. **Purpose**

To inform the Committee of The Water Group's communication strategy for its 2000/2001 water conservation campaign during the coming summer.

2. **Background**

Most of our Region's water supply comes directly from rivers. There is relatively little storage capacity in the supply system. During the summer, extended periods of low rainfall and warm weather can restrict the volume of water available to treat, while causing the amount of water used in the Region to increase by as much as 50 percent above the annual average. The Regional Council's ability to treat and supply enough water to meet demand at these times can be tested. Reducing peak demand volumes will ease pressure on the Council's supply network and help to postpone the need for additional infrastructure.

Efficient use of resources and a reducing cost of water supply are in the interests of all ratepayers in our supply area, and are therefore of significant interest to our City Council customers. The Regional Council has sought and obtained the co-operation and support of its customers in designing water conservation promotions for the last three years. They have been consulted and have given their support to the strategy outlined below.

3. **Strategy**

Analysis of weather patterns and volumes of water supplied points to garden watering as the main cause of large surges in demand for water, and the driver of the most extreme daily demand peaks.

Over recent years the Regional Council has commissioned several pieces of market research into attitudes and behaviour relating to water use and water conservation. The main findings were:

- In general, the public believes water conservation is important
- Around three-quarters of all people have a garden and water during summer.
- Women, particularly those aged 40 and over, are much more likely to be keen gardeners and responsible for watering decisions.
- A significant proportion of gardeners water more frequently than necessary, i.e., more often than twice a week.
- People did not identify the garden as an area where water could be saved.

Although the public generally agrees with the aims of water conservation, the majority of gardeners are not strongly self-motivated to make conservation measures part of their gardening routine. There was some awareness that metropolitan Wellington *could* experience water shortages during summer but little evidence of this knowledge having an impact on watering action.

Without a clear use/cost relationship or the real threat of water shortages as motivators, the best option open to us is to regularly prick gardeners' consciences about the "worthiness" of water conservation and how easy it is to be "a good citizen". Our strategy is therefore to target garden water users and to try to make conservation measures personally relevant, easy to remember and palatable.

4. **1999/2000 Campaign in Review**

For the last three years we have used a gardening "expert" to offer garden friendly advice that will also contribute to water conservation. The campaign for 1999/2000 moved to the use of television advertising, featuring gardening personality Maggie Barry. The campaign set out to:

- Target women, particularly those over the age of 40.
- Build on the main message from the last two years - that it is possible both to look after your garden AND conserve water.
- Keep the message simple by concentrating on a few key ideas
- Tackle frequency of watering
- Play on water conservation guilt
- Repeat key messages frequently
- Achieve wide coverage of the target audience

The advertisement was screened a total of 118 times in the six weeks between 9 January and 19 February, an average of 20 placements per week. The final total for viewing ratings was significantly better than that forecast by Television New Zealand.

More importantly, over 70 percent of all people in our main target groups remembered seeing the advertisement. The vast majority recalled at least some of the advice and said both the advice and presenter were credible. These results represent a marked improvement over the campaigns of preceding years.

5. **2000/2001 Campaign**

The strategy and tactical approach of last year's campaign will be repeated this summer.

Advertising time is available on TV 1 and TV2 for the Wellington area only. Targeting information is available on a programme by programme basis so we can weight our advertising placement towards reaching a female audience. Television airtime is being arranged for January and February. The campaign is expected to achieve similar coverage as last year.

The Wellington Regional Council newspaper *Elements* will be used to promote the water conservation campaign (December issue). It will carry a front page lead story about the campaign, with an endorsement from Maggie Barry.

6. **Communications**

A media release will be prepared to coincide with the first screenings of the advertisement in January. Further releases will be used, if necessary, to highlight extreme demand conditions and the resulting need for the public to take greater care to conserve water.

7. **Financial**

A budget of \$70,000 has been approved as part of the overall budget process. This includes a contingency sum of \$10,000 for additional advertising should the summer be exceptionally dry and water demand is excessive.

8. **Environmental Aspects**

This campaign is expected to reduce the environmental impact of our activities. It aims to postpone or remove the need to develop new water sources or build additional infrastructure in order to meet the water requirements of metropolitan Wellington. It should also help to reduce chemical and electricity usage for water treatment and supply, and the volume of treatment waste to dispose of.

9. **Recommendation**

That the report be received and the information noted.

Report prepared by:

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