

STOP AUCKLAND SEWAGE OVERFLOWS COALITION

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FACTS
about
Auckland's drainage infrastructure and
WATER QUALITY
in
central Auckland's watercourses and estuaries, and in the Waitemata Harbour

The infrastructure

- Older suburbs on the Auckland isthmus have a combined single pipe sewage/wastewater/stormwater system of 19th C design.
- This system is designed with overflow outfalls as “safety valves” when the pipes overflow with rainwater.
- It was designed for the low density housing of the day.

The present day effect of this out-moded infrastructure

- The system now overflows when rainfall exceeds 5mm of continuous rain. These overflows occur over 50 times annually.
- Currently over 2 million cu M of the contaminated overflow discharge into local waterways and the Waitemata Harbour every year.

The unacceptable consequences of this failing infrastructure

- Smelly overflows that spread sewage and wastewater debris onto surrounding land, into the waterways (and floodplains in heavier rain), and into harbour and beaches.
- Unacceptably high E. coli bacterial readings – readings up to 190,000 per 100ml have been made in the Kelmarna Stream. The “swimmable” level is set at 540.
- Recommendations not to swim for 48 hours after rain, at beaches from Whau River to Okahu Bay.
- Permanent signs warning against swimming and food collection in St Marys Bay, Cox's Bay and the Meola stream catchment including the Meola reef.

Other concerns

- The Unitary Plan permits an increase in impermeable surfaces in the older central suburbs from 42% to 62% of the land area: reducing the natural rainfall soakage, increasing stormwater inflow and potential for overflows.
- Any release of water contaminated with sewage carries a public health risk. Auckland health authorities are investigating spikes in stomach upsets after heavy rain – sewage-contaminated overflows may be the reason.
- Auckland Council/Watercare obtained a resource consent for these overflows via a non-notified (ie behind closed doors) application, made to itself as the regulatory authority.

What can be done? – Possible questions for parliamentary candidates

- Auckland City is up to its credit rating borrowing limits. Will your party support providing Auckland Council with financial assistance to remediate this infrastructure deficit in Auckland?
- Will your party support amending the RMA to ensure resource consents sought by a local authority for its own use (including the use of any CCO) must be conducted on a notified basis?
- Will your party support legislation to appoint a Regulator to oversee the mitigation/elimination of these overflows (as has happened in Canada, the UK and the USA)?