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Hawke's Bay

TODAY

Havelock North people walking for clean water following gastro outbreak

By Victoria White



Placards made for the Walk for Water rally

Havelock North spoke with their feet today when about hundred people turned out for the Walk for Water.

Organised by Hastings District Council candidates Bayden Barber and Damon Harvey, the walk comes after the gastro outbreak which left about 5200 people - over a third of the Havelock North population - sick.

It is a way for people to show their support to the more than 5000 whanau, friends, business owners and work colleagues who have been impacted by the water contamination, Mr Barber and Mr Harvey said.

The Walk for Water left from the water fountain in Havelock North at 8.30am.

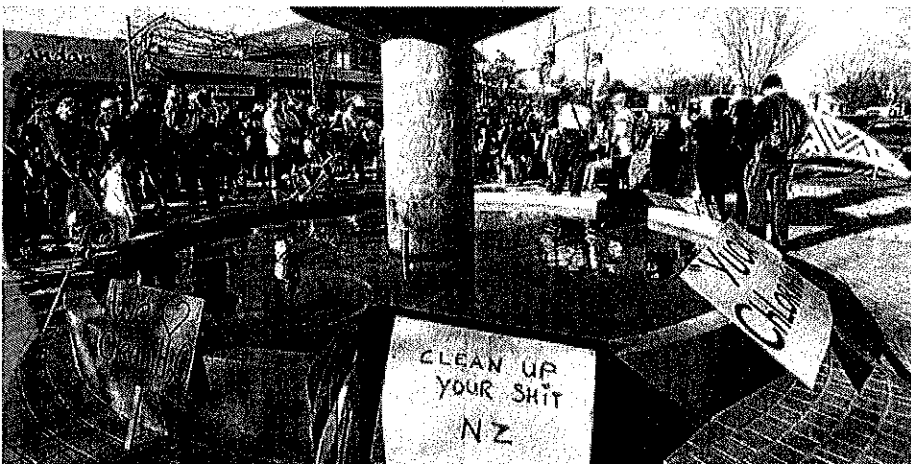
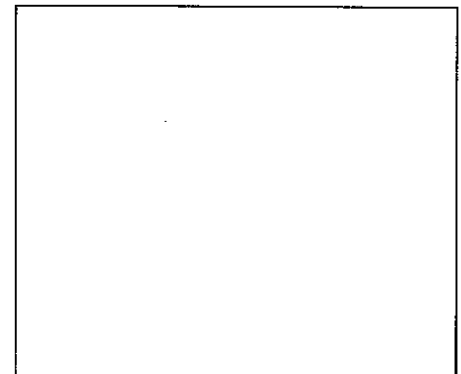
Joining residents are councillors, MPs and Hawke's Bay District Health Board chief executive Kevin Snee.

Hastings mayor Lawrence Yule was also there saying he had been invited by the organisers.

He said like in any crisis there were good things that came from them. One of these included that Hawke's Bay had taken water for granted.

"There are also learnings on how we need to test our water more than the national standard and have more regulations," he said.

Havelock North resident Scott Kelly is marching alongside his three daughters. He spent yesterday making placards and have shared them amongst participants.



The Havelock North community Walk for Water

The family had been sick with campylobacter and Mr Kelly spent five days in hospital with the illness.

"I'm still not completely right," he said.

The outbreak was a big event which had happened in the community, he said and he was walking to show his support and ask for the truth from local agencies.

"The whole ward (in hospital) was Havelock North people," he said.

Ikaroa Rawhiti MP Meka Whaitiri said she was taking part to highlight that in 2016 every New Zealander has a right to clean drinking water.

"We're bringing attention to the issue, it isn't just about Havelock North, it's about the country," she said.

As the crowd walked down Havelock Rd, and then Heretaunga St East, motorists honked as they drove past the crowd of young, and old, pushing strollers or walking dogs.

Placards reading "only pure water can save us" and "yucky chlorination" were hoisted high, as participants repeated chants led by Mr Barber.

After spending an hour and a half walking nearly 5km, the group marched into the Hastings CBD, and were greeted by a powhiri at the fountain.

Free food, and water were handed out as speeches were made from Ngati Kahungunu chairman Ngahiwi Tomoana, Mr Yule, and organisers.

Mr Barber said the turnout had been great, which he felt sent a clear message.

"It's been a great way to unite everybody," he said, "we didn't want politicians to be on one side, and the community on the other, it's a great sign of solidarity."

Mr Harvey had carried a bucket half-filled with water from the Havelock North fountain on his head during the march, pouring it into the Hastings fountain on the groups arrival.

The march had raised awareness of the water issues facing Hawke's bay, and showed support for those who had been sick.

"Communities tend to get together in times of adversity," he said, adding it was still important to show a united front now the worst of the crisis was over.

Tukituki Labour candidate Anna Lorck joined those on the march, and said in regards to Havelock North's water, "we cannot go back to normal, we need to create change".

"It might start with a walk for water, but it doesn't end here. It might not be that easy, but we can lead the way for the rest of New Zealand. We have to keep this going," she said.

"Its making sure something good comes out of something that has been so devastating."

- Hawkes Bay Today

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3 comments

There would have been lucky to be 50 people here. Most of these were employees and extended family and children of Mr Hardys PR company

Actual people are getting on with things

Bruce - 08:29 PM Saturday, 3 Sep 2016

100 people walked (maybe) and it becomes news. Most would be council candidates and their friends as it election time. Add fluoride to the water and if you don't like it use a water filter but don't hold business and peoples health to Russian Roulette on how clean the water will be.

Kiwi Adventure - West Auckland - 08:29 PM Saturday, 3 Sep 2016

People who advocate un-chlorinated municipal water supply should be held criminally liable. That should put an end to this ridiculous 3rd world rubbish.

I'm stunned its even possible to have un-chlorinated municipal supply water in 2016. How may other unsuspecting towns and cities are there in NZ like this.

Have we not learned from some of the great plagues and the like of dark ages. As is evidenced this is a public health issue on an enormous scale.

The Government needs legislation to stop this sort of thing happening again, anywhere in the country. This is just not good enough in 2016 and in a so called wealthy, developed nation like New Zealand.

Steve Away - 08:29 PM Saturday, 3 Sep 2016