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I wrote this article on September 30, 2019 and submit it as my submission into the Parliamentary Inquiry into TasWater.

After reading the recent reply Tim Slade received from Dr Veitch, Tasmania's Director of Public Health, I cannot fathom why Public Health are not acting incisively to ensure that all residents of Pioneer have a supply of safe drinking water supplied to their house taps.

Public Health have ultimate responsibility for the provision of safe potable drinking water to their residents. Public Health oversee TasWater, who report to them.

Public Health rightly disconnected the drinking water supply to the small township of Pioneer in 2012, when it was found to be contaminated with lead. Lead is not safe to be ingested at any level and this is especially so for pregnant women and children.

Meanwhile the cause of the lead contamination was hotly contested by TasWater, despite expert scientists showing that the lead originated in TasWater's own old pipe-work.

How long Pioneer's water supply had been contaminated prior to its disconnection is a moot point, but back to the present issue...

Following initial discussions with the residents of Pioneer, including Public Health, a collective decision was made to install water tanks at TasWater's expense while other options for potable water to the town were reviewed. The agreed directive stated that each collecting system, including the roof of the resident's house, would be checked to ensure all the collecting systems were safe under present day standards to provide safe, clean tank water, fit for drinking – and replaced if not.

A decision somehow, somewhere, made by someone in September 2017, was made not to re-install potable water to Pioneer, even though the area has been shown not to have sufficient rainfall to provide enough drinking water and water for irrigation and fire-fighting.

Meanwhile, here we are, nearly seven years later with Dr Veitch writing about '*...the inconvenience these circumstances have posed to residents...*' The inability to provide a water supply free of lead after removing the potable supply due to lead contamination is not an inconvenience as Dr Veitch states; it is an abrogation of duty of care by Dr. Veitch and Public Health.

Public Health should have closely overseen the agreement between TasWater and the residents of Pioneer. It did not, and is still refusing, nearly seven years later, to ensure TasWater's CEO and Board act appropriately and in a timely fashion to deliver a safe water supply to all the residents.

Why this should be the case is unfathomable. Whether Pioneer regains a potable water supply needs discussion – safe drinking water and the access to a reliable water supply for all uses was what the residents believed they had before it was abruptly terminated in 2012. The cost to the taxpayer in this protracted debacle is difficult to assess. However I am sure it would have been much less if this whole sorry affair had been dealt with in a more professional, efficient and caring way.

The cost to the residents; psychological, medical and financial, has not been canvassed.

Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right and the only acceptable proposal at present is that Public Health take immediate control of the process of providing this essential service. It has a duty of care.

TasWater's actions, and lack of action, demand scrutiny. The CEO's behaviour in this matter is indefensible. The present situation is unacceptable.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Bleaney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Alison Bleaney.