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Six-week wait for Waiheke water delivery

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A desperately dry Christmas is in store for some Waiheke Islanders, with fresh water unable to be delivered to many homes for at least the next six weeks.



Waiheke Island. Photo: 123RF

Residents and businesses on the island rely on rainwater, bores if they're lucky enough to have them, or tankers to keep them going.

But one of the local supply services is out of action at the moment and the other three are at capacity.

WaiWater owner Steve Malcolm said his phone had been ringing off the hook and he was turning away dozens of people each day.

"I hear every excuse in the book and I find it hard to harden up but you just have to. I get approached in the street and so do my family and I think that's unfair."

Mr Malcolm said he was mainly hearing from people who rented out their baches.

He said people arrive on the island and find there's no water in their holiday home because the manager hasn't checked the water supply.

As tourist numbers swell, Auckland Council is considering increasing the amount of water that can be drawn from the island's aquifers to cope with demand.

The island's population grows from 10,000 to about 40,000 over the holidays and visitors are being told to cut right down on using water.

Waiheke Holiday Homes owner Lynda Hull said locals were good at conserving their water, but people who visited from cities could struggle.

"If it's yellow let it mellow in the toilet and it's fun to go for a swim at the beach rather than get in the shower."

She said so far none of the homes she runs have had to cancel bookings for the summer.

Local board chairperson Paul Walden is one local whose tank has run dry. His next delivery is due at the end of January.

His family - which includes five children - are filling up containers with about 60 litres each day from the treated water taps which are available throughout on the island.

"That's mainly drinking water and a bit of dishwashing, we're washing clothes at friends' places and we get to the beach for a couple of swims a day."

Instead of showering at home, Mr Walden said people should use the treated water at the island's beaches.

But he said the council was looking at ways to increase water availability to residents.

"So that where it's appropriate commercial suppliers are able to get more water out of the ground."

Mr Walden said the island's water companies wanted to be able to draw more water from aquifers and the council expected to make a decision in a couple of days.