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Doctors call for urgent statewide fluoride fix

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland is demanding decisive action at this week's Local Government Association of Queensland Annual Conference in Brisbane to resolve an impasse between councils and State Government over drinking water fluoridation.

Many of the state's largest communities – including Cairns, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Warwick and Stanthorpe – have been fluoride-free since a 2012 legislative change allowed councils to stop fluoridating water supplies, with some now claiming the cost is prohibitive.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said it was time for government and councils to end the piecemeal approach.

“Local Government Minister Stirling Hinchcliffe is expected to attend the conference, providing an ideal opportunity to strike a collaborative approach with councillors to covering the cost and infrastructure,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“There is ample evidence to prove that fluoridation is an affordable and efficient public health prevention method that all Queenslanders deserve.

“Councillors must ignore the conspiracy theorists and follow the science: fluoridation combined with good oral hygiene reduces tooth decay by up to 40 per cent.”

Dr Dhupelia said councils that had fluoridated their water supplies were experiencing community benefits with a three-year study of the Logan-Beaudesert water supply finding fluoridation led to a 19 per cent drop in tooth decay among children aged 5-9 years.

Townsville City Council estimated fluoridating its water supply costs as little as 60 cents per person, per year.

Dr Dhupelia said comments made earlier this month by North West Hospital and Health Service Chair Paul Woodhouse should spur councillors and Mr Hinchcliffe into action for people in the Mt Isa region.

“Mr Woodhouse praised fluoridation for reducing social disadvantage, being cost-effective and benefiting people of all ages across his region,” he said.

“It's 65 years this month (October) since the first Australian water supply was fluoridated and it's high time all Queenslanders received the undeniable benefits of one of the 20th century's greatest achievements in public health,” said Dr Dhupelia.

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