

## **NEW LAWS POINT TO STATE GOVERNMENT FOR ACTION ON FLUORIDE**

Doctors are urging the Palaszczuk Government stop stalling and act decisively on water fluoridation with new federal laws confirming state and territory governments are responsible for the public health measure.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) last week made legislative changes to clarify that national regulation was not required and that fluoride in drinking water was a proven, safe and effective method for state and territory governments to prevent tooth decay<sup>[i]</sup>.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said Queensland had the worst oral health in the country<sup>[ii]</sup> with nearly one third of the state missing out on fluoridated drinking water.

“The Premier, The Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, the Queensland Chief Health Officer and Chief Dental Officer have all supported fluoridation,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“There is no further reason for the government to delay reintroducing laws mandating all local governments to fluoridate their drinking water supplies.

“The young and the elderly are suffering the most with the government’s own statistics<sup>[iii]</sup> revealing 43% of children aged 5-6 and 55% of those aged 5-14 experience dental decay, with the figure rising to 70% for indigenous children.

“In addition, dentists report increasing rates of decay amongst the elderly, particularly in residential aged care homes where many have lost the ability to manage their dental hygiene and are forced to have all their teeth removed.”

Dr Dhupelia said more than 20 per cent of Queenslanders missed out on dental care because it was not covered by Medicare and they could not afford private health care, adding pressure to an already over-burdened public health system.

“At a time when we are seeing over-crowded public hospitals, children and elderly people are taking up beds to have their teeth removed under general anaesthetic because of unnecessarily high rates of dental decay,” he said.

Queensland Councils were allocated \$35 million in 2008 to fluoridate drinking water supplies under new laws passed by former Premier Anna Bligh. However, the Newman LNP government changed the legislation in 2012 to give Councils the option to stop fluoridation.

The move led to 19 local governments, including Councils of large population centres such Cairns, Rockhampton, Southern Downs and Bundaberg, removing fluoride from their drinking water.

“The National Health and Medical Research Council, the COAG Oral Health plan, state dental authorities, state health ministers and now the TGA have all supported fluoridated drinking water,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“The Palaszczuk Government needs to stop stalling on this issue and act decisively. Fluoridated water stops the rot before it sets in.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tga.gov.au/media-release/state-and-territory-governments-continue-regulate-fluoridated-drinking-water-australia>

<sup>1</sup> <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/915-Filling-the-gap-A-universal-dental-scheme-for-Australia.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/research-reports/reports/public-health/cho-report/current>