

Doctors urge politicians to stop playing politics with public health

Councils that do not fluoridate their water supplies are contributing to the high rate of dental decay in Queensland and to the unnecessary hospitalisations of children who need to have their teeth removed under general anaesthetic, according to AMA Queensland.

In a letter sent to Councils on Friday, AMA Queensland called for the immediate reintroduction of fluoride in all drinking supplies so every Queenslanders had access to the equitable and effective preventative public health measure.

AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia warned the biggest losers in the current fluoridation debate were children and the elderly.

“With 28 per cent of the Queensland population not receiving the supported benefits of fluoridated water, the rates of dental decay, particularly in children and the elderly are set to increase,” he said.

Councils were given the option on providing fluoride in their water supplies in 2012 when the former Newman Government changed the law, a move that led to 19 local governments removing fluoride from their drinking water.

Dr Dhupelia called on local and State politicians to stop playing politics with community health and urged all Queensland MPs to provide bipartisan support to legislate to mandate fluoridated water.

AMA Queensland has been advocating strongly for the past six years to reintroduce fluoridated water, including writing submissions on the scientific evidence supporting fluoride, meeting with government to reinforce the public preventative health benefits, lobbying Councils and liaising with Hospital and Health Services about the need to protect their communities.

Regardless, new researchⁱ recently found Queensland has the highest dental decay rate in the country.

Last Friday’s letter to Councils followed AMA Queensland’s correspondence earlier this month to Premier Anastacia Palazczuk in which it said doctors were deeply disappointed with her refusal to legislate for fluoride in all drinking water.

“There is overwhelming evidence that fluoridating water supplies is proven to be a safe, effective, preventative public health measure,” the letter said. “Dental decay costs the state millions of dollars in health care while fluoridated water stops the rot before it sets in.”

The letter highlighted evidence from the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Queensland Chief Health Officer and COAG National Oral Health Plan as well as support for fluoridated water supplies from State Dental Authorities and all State and Territory Governments including Queensland’s Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Chief Health Officer

“We see the Queensland Parliament’s decision to mandate fluoridated water in Queensland is inevitable,” the letter said.

<https://grattan.edu.au/events/filling-the-dental-gap-meeting-unmet-oral-health-needs/>