



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) submission on the FSANZ draft food standard (regulation) for the voluntary addition of fluoride to bottled water – application A588.

The dental health benefits of fluoridated water are clear

- The recent NHMRC review determined that “Fluoridation of drinking water remains the most effective and socially equitable means of achieving community-wide exposure to the caries prevention effects of fluoride” (NHMRC 2007).
- Water fluoridation has been judged one of the top ten great public health achievements in the 20th century (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 1999).
- The level of evidence is compelling from international and Australian research (WHO 2003, Do and Spencer 2007, NHMRC 2007, Spencer et al 2008).

Fluoridated water is safe

The NHMRC’s recent systematic review of fluoridated water has affirmed the safety of water fluoridation (NHMRC 2007).

Not all Australians have access to fluoridated water

About a quarter of Australians do not have access to fluoridated water. While fluoridation of drinking water supplies is being extended, particularly in Queensland and Victoria, there will still be a sizeable number of Australians who will not have access. Outside capital cities 15% of households are not connected to mains/town water (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007).

The consumption of bottled water is increasing

More people are consuming bottled water and missing out on the caries preventive action of fluoridated water. Sales of ‘still water’ are reported to have increased by 162% in the 10 years to 2006, up to an average of 46 litres per person per year (Levy and Tapsell 2007). The majority of bottled water drinkers are younger people (Australian Bottled Water Institute 2008).

Dental caries rates are increasing among some Australian children

A national time series study shows that there were increases in dental caries in children from the mid 1990s up to 2002, the most recently reported national data (Armfield and Spencer 2008). Substitution of fluoridated water for non fluoridated beverages is one possible explanation of this increase (Armfield and Spencer 2004).

Fluoridated bottled water will give people a choice to access the proven dental caries prevention benefit of fluoride where fluoridated water is not available or when people do not wish to drink reticulated water.

The PHAA supports the draft food standard for the voluntary addition of fluoride in the range of 0.6 – 1.0 milligrams per litre and mandatory labelling to indicate that the product contains added fluoride.

The PHAA also supports the FSANZ position that claims of nutrient benefits will not be allowed. Such claims may lead to inappropriate marketing.

References

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