

Mr Donald Cooper, Balranald Shire Council
Mr Luke Maloney, Upper Lachlan Shire Council
Mr Bill Ellison, Palerang Shire Council
Ms Carmel Krogh, Eurobodalla Shire Council
Mr Paul Anderson, Lithgow Shire Council

Dear Mr Anderson,

Fluoridation of water supplies

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is a forum for the promotion of the health of the public as well as being a professional resource for public health personnel. The Association provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on public health and actively undertakes advocacy for public health policy, development, research and training.

Currently, the delivery of oral health care in Australia has severe limitations:

- 650,000 people are on waiting lists for public dental care - average waiting time is 27 months.
- 5 million adults are eligible for public dental care, many of whom experience acute problems of access to dental services.
- 2.1 million adults are not eligible for public dental care but costs make them delay or avoid treatment.

Low-income adults, people living in rural and remote areas, Indigenous people, nursing home residents, people with disabilities, young adults on income support payments and single parents are worst affected.

While the PHAA is seeking changes to the delivery of oral health care services, we would also like to encourage all authorities responsible for water services to fluoridate water as an active public health measure that will in time reduce the number and severity of oral health problems.

Misinformation about the safety and efficacy of water fluoridation is often directed at local authorities when this issue is discussed. Often those directing this information are vociferous, but not well informed by a scientific evidence base.

At the 162 session of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in September 2006, members supported the publication of the NHMRC's support of water fluoridation. NHMRC's selective tender for the conduct of a systematic review of fluorides and health in Australia will be the first step in addressing this responsibility for raising the standard of individual and public health.

The PHAA believes that water fluoridation is an important population health measure and encourages the Lithgow Shire Council to take the public health measure of fluoridating it's water as early as possible.

I would be happy to talk to you about this issue should you think that this would be useful. I can be contacted on plaut@phaa.net.au or at (02) 62852373.

Yours sincerely

Pieta Laut
Executive Director