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University survey finds majority support for water fluoridation

There is 76 percent support for water fluoridation, according to the 2006 Queensland Social Survey conducted by the Population Research Laboratory at Central Queensland University using a representative sample of the Queensland population.

The research found 83 percent of Queenslanders believe it is safe and 86 percent believe it is effective in preventing tooth decay. Respondents with higher annual incomes were more likely to support water fluoridation.

Meanwhile in Geneva, Switzerland, 80 experts from 30 countries expressed "deep concern about growing disparities in dental health" and reaffirmed the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of the daily use of optimal fluoride.

The global consultation on *Oral Health through Fluoride* convened by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Dental Federation (FDI) and the International Association of Dental Research (IADR) urged governments to develop effective legislation, necessary directives and programmes to ensure access to fluoride for dental health in all countries.

WHO is the accepted leader in global health matters, FDI is the voice of oral health professionals around the world, and IADR advances research for the improvement of oral health worldwide. The full text of the declaration is available at http://www.fdiworldental.org/public_health/3_7fluoride.html.

Medical health professionals championing water fluoridation for Queensland are state branches of the Australian Dental Association, the Australian Medical Association, the Pharmaceutical Society and the Public Health Association Australia - known as the Queensland Oral Health Alliance.

"The formation of this alliance this year demonstrates doctors, pharmacists, dentists and public health advocates are taking a strategic approach to reducing the overburden of dental disease which is having a significant impact on the general health of Queenslanders," said ADAQ's fluoridation spokesman Dr Robert McCray.

"It is a concern to us that the current national oral health plan is gathering dust," he said.

Two years ago a comprehensive national oral health plan, *Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2004-13* was endorsed by Australian Health Ministers with one of the recommended short-term actions being: "Extend fluoridation of public water supplies to communities across Australia with populations of 1000 or more."

Dr McCray said the interests of the majority should guide decision-makers in Queensland, with the small but vocal number of objectors to this internationally-endorsed public health policy being able to use reverse osmosis filters, or bottled water, if they prefer.

Before the recent state election, 612ABC radio polled Queensland politicians on five key issues and almost all those elected supported water fluoridation.

For comment, contact Dr Robert McCray on 0412 145 771.

Visit www.fluoridationqld.com for more information on water fluoridation.

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