Healthy teeth for all – fluoridated water needed across the Northern Territory

This week during Dental Health Week and in the lead up to the Northern Territory election, the Northern Territory Branch of the Public Health Association Australia (PHAA) is calling for fluoridation to be implemented in all communities across the Territory within the first year of the new government.

Fluoridation of water is the simplest and most effective preventive measure for stopping tooth decay, and is especially important among populations with limited access to dental care such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote communities.

Dr Suzanne Belton, President of the PHAA NT Branch and speaking on behalf of the Fluoridation Alliance said, ‘We’re calling on all major political parties and candidates in the Territory to commit to taking action to close the dental health gap and provide healthy water.

‘Water fluoridation is a vital public health measure that helps ensure better dental health through preventing tooth decay – that’s why it’s supported by every state, territory and federal health department in Australia.

‘It has had an enormous impact on improving Australians’ oral health over the past 60 years; and almost 90% of the country has access to fluoridated water.

‘Yet 13 remote communities in the Northern Territory with populations of over 600 people are missing out on this important public health benefit.

‘Without access to fluoridated water these communities are at risk of experiencing greater tooth decay, tooth loss and associated diseases, and poorer general health and wellbeing,’ Dr Belton said.

CEO of Miwatj Health, Eddie Mulholland agreed saying, ‘Fluoridating water supplies in remote Indigenous communities will contribute to improving oral health, and the residents of East Arnhem and other remote areas deserve the same health advantages as the rest of Australia.’

This unaccountable gap in public health care remains despite prolonged calls for action from the Fluoridation Alliance; an alliance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, AMSANT, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Australian Medical Association, the National Oral Health Alliance, and the Australian Dental Association.

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