



**Hon Stephen Robertson MP**  
Member for Stretton



Minister for Health

MI159433  
MO: H/08/10149

23 DEC 2008

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 28 November 2008 regarding Petition No. 1173-08 concerning the fluoridation of drinking water in Queensland.

The *Water Fluoridation Act 2008*, which mandates the addition of fluoride to drinking water supplies, was passed by Parliament with bi-partisan support on 13 March 2008. I am delighted that both sides of politics support fluoridation as one of the Bligh Government's most significant public health initiatives. In a move which will bring Queensland into line with other states, 80% of Queenslanders will have access to fluoridated drinking water within two years, increasing to 90% by 2012.

I can assure the people of Queensland that the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation has been frequently re-evaluated, and the weight of evidence consistently shows that fluoridated water is safe.

The most recent National Health and Medical Research Council review - *A Systematic Review of the Efficacy and Safety of Fluoridation (2007)* made the following recommendation: "Fluoridation of drinking water remains the most effective and socially equitable means of achieving community-wide exposure to the caries prevention effects of fluoride. It is recommended that water be fluoridated in the target range of 0.6 to 1.1 mg/L, depending on climate, to balance reduction of dental caries and occurrence of dental fluorosis." This extensive and rigorous review can be accessed at: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh41syn.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh41syn.htm).

Those who do not wish to receive the benefit of fluoride can access other sources of water such as tank, bottled or filtered (reverse osmosis) water. A reverse osmosis filter system can be purchased for about \$500.00 from water filter retailers. However, reverse osmosis filters will filter out other beneficial minerals, although generally food will be the principal source of these nutrients. I am also advised that those who wish to exclusively drink significant quantities of reverse osmosis-filtered water may increase the risk of developing certain conditions that may result from the consumption of low-hardness water.

19th Floor State Health Building  
147-163 Charlotte Street Brisbane  
GPO Box 48 Brisbane  
Queensland 4001 Australia  
**Telephone +61 7 3234 1191**  
**Facsimile +61 7 3229 4731**  
**Email [health@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:health@ministerial.qld.gov.au)**  
**Website [www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au)**

It is not the responsibility of Queensland Health to provide non-fluoridated water in fluoridated communities or provide fluoride supplements in non-fluoridated communities. This is a choice individual community members can make.

Queensland Health has been canvassing the views of Queenslanders for many years, and since 2004, between 60-70% of the Queensland population has been consistently in favour of water fluoridation. Given this level of public support, it was considered unnecessary to hold a referendum on the issue.

Access to additional information relating to the fluoridation of drinking water, is available through the Queensland Health website at: [www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride). Alternatively, the Australian Dental Association's website may also be referenced at: [www.ada.org.au/OralHealth/FLN/flnfront.aspx](http://www.ada.org.au/OralHealth/FLN/flnfront.aspx).

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Sophie Dwyer, Senior Director, Environmental Health Branch, Queensland Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3234 0941.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**