



**Hon Stephen Robertson MP**  
Member for Stretton



**Queensland  
Government**

Minister for Health

MI159948  
MO: H/08/10465

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 4 December 2008 referring to Petition Number 1178-08 regarding water fluoridation and the use of purified recycled water to augment drinking water supplies.

Purified recycled water is the end result of a '7-barrier' treatment process that produces drinking water from waste water. It is important to note that in Queensland purified recycled water is required by law to meet a large number of strict quality control and health guidelines before being added to existing drinking water storages. Over 40 years experience with the augmentation of drinking water supplies with purified recycled water around the world has shown that its consumption has not been associated with any adverse health effects.

Despite the proven safety of purified recycled water, the Queensland Government has decided that purified recycled water will only be used as an emergency response. Purified recycled water will be added to Wivenhoe Dam when combined South East Queensland dam levels drop to 40 per cent. Purified recycled water will not be added directly to drinking water.

Drinking water and recycled water providers are not self regulated. The regulatory framework for the production and supply of recycled water and drinking water by providers is captured by both the *Public Health Act 2005* and the *Water (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. The regulatory framework requires both recycled and drinking water providers to undertake management planning including hazard identification and control.

With regards to water fluoridation, it is not "mass medication" but topping up the level of naturally occurring fluoride in the water to provide a substantial public health benefit. Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral which can be found in water, plants, rocks, soil, air and food, and worldwide approximately 360 million people drink water that naturally contains fluoride. Deniliquin Shire provides water filters or a rainwater tank to community members with medical certificates advising that they should not be exposed to fluoride. This was a decision made locally by Deniliquin Shire to best suit their small community. It is not a decision which is common throughout other States and Territories in Australia that fluoridate their water supply. The Queensland Government has made the decision not to subsidise the cost of filters to remove fluoride from drinking water supplies in Queensland.

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)**

Whilst the Local Government Association of Queensland 2005 survey on water fluoridation showed that many respondents thought there should be a statewide referendum on water fluoridation, the survey also found that 73 per cent of respondents favoured fluoridation. Queensland Health has been canvassing the views of Queenslanders for many years, and since 2004, between 60-70 per cent of the Queensland population has been consistently in favour of water fluoridation. Given this level of public support, it is unnecessary to hold a referendum on the issue. The Government often proclaims laws that limit individual choice for a greater community benefit and no other health issues are decided by referendum. Examples include mandatory wearing of seat belts and anti-smoking laws.

If you would like to access additional information relating to the fluoridation of drinking water, please refer to the Queensland Health website at [www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/fluoride). Alternatively, you may wish to refer to the Australian Dental Association's website at [www.ada.org.au/OralHealth/FLN/flnfront.aspx](http://www.ada.org.au/OralHealth/FLN/flnfront.aspx).

Yours sincerely



**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**

**06 FEB 2009**