



Hon Lawrence Springborg MP
Minister for Health

19 SEP 2012

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letters regarding petition numbers 1959-12 and 1914-12 tabled in Parliament on 22 August 2012, in relation to the requirement for the Bundaberg Regional Council to add fluoride to potable water supplies. As these petitions are similar in nature, I have taken the liberty of responding to both petitions in this letter. I therefore ask that this response be noted against each petition.

I appreciate that there are many people who, for various reasons, are opposed to fluoridation. Following extensive debate and public discussion on this issue, the Queensland Parliament passed new laws on 13 March 2008, to introduce fluoride into Queensland's water supplies. After careful consideration of the issues and opinions of Queenslanders, the LNP supported the introduction of these laws.

Numerous studies and subsequent reviews have confirmed the effectiveness of water fluoridation in reducing tooth decay and the safety of water fluoridation. Water fluoridation benefits people of all ages. It acts on developing teeth as well as teeth already present in the mouth. One of the great advantages of water fluoridation is that it allows everybody to benefit without having to make a conscious effort. Around 87% of Queenslanders now benefit from water fluoridation.

Under the *Water Fluoridation Act 2008*, Councils can apply to me, as Minister for Health, for exemption from the requirement to fluoridate one or more of their water supplies. However, the current grounds for exemption in the Act are very limited. Bundaberg Council has not made an exemption application to me in accordance with these requirements so there are no grounds on which I can approve an exemption from the current requirement to fluoridate.

Given the limitations imposed by the current legislation, the government is currently exploring options to enable us to take account of the particular circumstances of water suppliers such as Bundaberg Regional Council. Once a firm direction has been established, I will make it a priority for Queensland Health to contact Council to ensure that they are aware of the outcome.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely



LAWRENCE SPRINGBORG MP
Minister for Health