

**Submission  
No 253**

## **INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW**

**Organisation:**

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

# **Submission to Inquiry into Dental Services in NSW**

**Anton Ingarfield**

I am appalled by the lack of real and effective initiatives to improve oral health on the North Coast of NSW. We are told by the North Coast Area Health Service that our region experiences some of the worst levels of oral health in NSW.

Initiatives which would be highly effective in improving oral health would include:

1. the reintroduction of free and regular dental check-ups in schools
2. putting dental health care back onto the Medicare Program
3. an extensive public oral and dietary health education campaign
4. controls placed on advertisements by the sugar food industry as has occurred in regard to the tobacco industry.

So what do we get instead of this? Yet another obscene push to fluoridate our water supplies. This is accompanied by claims for its effectiveness which truly insult our intelligence. An example is from Dr Clive Wright, NSW Health Chief Dental Officer:

“While water fluoridation is not the sole answer to preventing oral disease, it can reduce dental decay in children by up to 60%”.

What rubbish! Where are the studies that support such ludicrous claims? Even studies which are presented in support of fluoridation indicate that reductions in dental decay in the order of fractions of tooth surfaces.

Conversely a great deal of evidence indicates fluoridation is responsible for a number of negative health effects, including the high incidence of dental and skeletal fluorosis, increase rates of hip fractures and greater chances of osteosarcoma in adolescent males. Much of this readily accessible evidence comes from the US where fluoridation of water supplies began.

My submission is particular in regard to the manner in which fluoridation of town water supplies is currently being enforced against the wishes of a great many people in communities across northern NSW.

I would like to submit the strongest possible objection to the strategies used by NSW Health and the North Coast Area Health Service in enforcing fluoridation on communities on the mid North Coast Region.

I live in the Bellingen Shire. From discussions with some of our local Councillors it is apparent that Mr Terry Clout, of the (then) Mid North Coast Area Service, used the incentive of financial support for the installation and operation of fluoride dosing facilities to coerce Bellingen Shire Councillors into agreeing to refer the matter to a Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Advisory Committee for consideration.

In a letter from Terry Clout to Mr Mark Ferguson, General Manager of Coffs Harbour City Council, he specifically advises this council to avoid proper public consultation and the possibility of a referendum. To quote from that letter;

“Given my view as to the likely position of recurrent cost I fought hard to obtain an agreement from the Director General of Health for **100% of the capital cost should the matter be referred under Section 6A** (*my emphasis*). Given the circumstances of the Mid North Coast, this has been agreed to for the 2004/05 financial year on the reasoning that the **cost to Council and to Health in running and funding a campaign under a general referendum would be avoided and the money would be better spent in covering the cost of fluoridation of the water supplies.**” (*my emphasis*).

It is apparent from the above that Mr Clout was bending over backwards to avoid proper public consultation on the issue. No doubt he was aware that referendums in Bellingen Shire in 1987 and also in Coffs Harbour and Hastings Shires in 1991 had overwhelmingly rejected fluoridation.

Mr Clout also states in his letter;

“I also confirm that the Mid North Coast Area Health Service will provide to each Council \$20,000 for each of the 2004/05 and 2005/06 financial years to **defray the cost of implementation of fluoridation of water supplies should a Council refer the matter under Section 6A of the Act** for consideration and direction by the Department of Health and the Director General (on the advice of the Advisory Committee) determines to issue such a direction to Council.”

Again it is clear from the above that this council was put under considerable pressure to immediately refer the matter to Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Advisory Committee.

Although I have no documentation regarding the approach of Mr Clout to Bellingen Shire Council I have every reason to suspect that the same coercive tactics were used to pressure our council to capitulate.

Considering the make-up of the Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Advisory Committee there was never any doubt about the outcome of their "deliberations". Four out of the six members of this committee are active promoters of water fluoridation.

The Chairman, Dr Peter Hill, was the Acting Chief Dental Officer with NSW Health and an avid promoter of water fluoridation.

Dr Graham Craig is Associate Professor of Dentistry at Sydney University and is also a well known promoter of fluoridation.

Dr Diana Hart is the Northern Area Representative of the Australian Medical Association, a body which actively promotes and endorses fluoridation.

Dr Shanti Sivaneswaran is the Principle Oral Health Advisor for NSW Health and another vocal advocate for fluoridation.

Quite obviously this so called "advisory committee" is an attempt to add some sort of legitimacy to NSW Health arrogant predetermination to fluoridate all town water supplies across the state, regardless of the wishes of local communities. I would like to know under what circumstances would such an "advisory committee" advise that water supplies **not** be fluoridated, and if such a case has ever occurred.

In the Bellingen Shire, before we were consulted or even informed about what was going on, our Local Council had already passed a motion to defer the matter to the Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Advisory Committee.

However through a community campaign involving a highly successful petition to Bellingen Shire Council, followed by a majority vote at a Community Forum, our local community managed to convince council to conduct a plebiscite by mail on the issue.

The results of this plebiscite were (yet again) an overwhelming rejection of the proposal to fluoridate our water supplies by the Bellingen Shire community.

**Almost 40% of those on the local electoral roll responded, a remarkable response to a non-compulsory poll. Of these a total of 2165 residents, equivalent to over 70% of respondents, voted against the proposal to fluoridate Bellingen Shire town water supplies.**

However, in total disregard for the result of this plebiscite and the wishes of our community, the Director General of NSW Health Robyn Kruk has directed that Bellingen Shire town water supplies be fluoridated.

NSW Health is prepared to ignore the legitimate concerns and objections of the majority of our shire's residents. Some of these concerns are from people who suffer from allergenic reactions to fluorides which will significantly affect their well-being. Other people suffer from impaired kidney function. Being unable to eliminate fluorides they will be at a high risk of skeletal fluorosis and subsequent bone fractures.

**The willingness of NSW Health to disregard both the health risks of fluoridation and the will of my local community to reject the proposal to fluoridate our town water supplies is totally unacceptable.**

**I DO NOT GIVE CONSENT TO BEING MEDICATED WITH FLUORIDE.**