

**Submission  
No 252**

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

**Organisation:**

**Name:** Cr Kerry Child

**Telephone:**

**Date Received:** 21/09/2005

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

## Committee Social Issues - Fluoridation of water supplies

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**From:** "Kerry Child"  
**To:** <socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** 21/09/2005 3:40:08 pm  
**Subject:** Fluoridation of water supplies

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Dear Chair Jan Burnswoods,

I am a councillor with Bellingen Shire Council and was newly elected on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2004. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004, Terry Clout the former CEO Mid North Coast Area Health Service addressed our Council to put forth his case for why our water supply should be fluoridated. We were told that to receive any funding grant contributions, we would have to make a Council decision by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004. A few fellow councillors were very concerned about the pressure that they were applying to us to make a rushed decision and also the lack of time to consult our community. A bit of history, in 1987 our Council of the day held a referendum to ask whether residents wanted fluoride in their water and the result was 2:1 against.

Our next monthly Council meeting was 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004, and we had to make a decision after only 19 days of fact finding. Unfortunately we were narrowly defeated, and the motion allowed for Clause 6a of the Fluoridation of Public Drinking Water for the Director General to make a decision. At the next Council meeting a Rescission Motion was put forward to overturn that previous decision:  
 Motion " That Council advise the secretary of the Department of Health Committee under Section 6a of the Fluoridation of Public Drinking Water Act that:

- a) Due to concern at that lack of full community consultation this Council intends to conduct a Shire wide community forum where speakers both for and against fluoridation will be invited to speak and a professional (neutral) facilitator be appointed to conduct the forum.
- b) If it is the wish (by majority) of the said forum that Council conduct a mail plebiscite of all Bellingen Shire residents on the electoral roll, seeking direction to fluoridate the water supply.
- c) That the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and General Manager coordinate the above process.
- d) That the Director General take no action upon receipt of the Section 6a Committee Recommendation until the Council's shire wide community forum has been held and the results of the mail plebiscite are known.

This process is not to be interpreted as Council's view on fluoridation of our water supply."

This motion was carried and a public forum was held on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2004. Our local hall was full with over 200 residents and at the conclusion of the forum it was overwhelming carried that Council conduct a mail plebiscite.

Ballot papers and supporting documentation (for both sides) was mailed to 8633 people on our electoral roll. Counting of the ballot papers showed that Total votes received 3265, Total formal votes 3034 and that 2165 (or 71.36%) voted against fluoridation. This information was passed onto the Director General of NSW Health on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

So it came as a complete surprise on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005, eleven months later, to found out that the Director General had completely disregarded our community's plebiscite results and has gazetted for fluoridation to occur. As there are numerous methods for people to add fluoride to their system, besides in the water, I am extremely disappointed in the whole process. Our community has been forced into this situation, and whilst NSW Health will contribute funds for two years, then it is the Council's financial responsibility forever and a day. It is the easiest and cost effective way for NSW Health to address the situation of oral hygiene instead of looking at education and free dental clinics for a socioeconomic disadvantaged community.

I would appreciate your comments.

Yours sincerely  
 Cr Kerry Child