



Hon Stephen Robertson MP  
Member for Stretton



Queensland  
Government

RECEIVED  
16 MAY 2007  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
AND AGEING

Min to min

Minister for Health

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11 MAY 2007

The Honourable Mr Tony Abbott MP  
Federal Minister for Health and Ageing  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

(12) AT - ME (NA)  
TA - TA (A)  
Enviro Health  
dental

10 MAY 2007

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4/6/07

Dear Minister

Following your recent comments about the low level of water fluoridation in Queensland, I write to seek your advice about possible Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing assistance to help cover capital and recurrent costs associated with new fluoridation plants.

After the withdrawal of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program in 1994, Queensland was the only State Government to cover most of the costs of providing public sector oral health services. Despite investing more in public sector oral health than any other State or Territory, Queenslanders continue to suffer more tooth decay than their counterparts. The lack of Federal support for oral health in recent years has placed a significant burden on the Queensland health system.

The most substantial efforts to progress water fluoridation in Queensland have been achieved by amending legislation and allocating \$6 million to encourage councils to implement water fluoridation. This amount will however be insufficient to fluoridate all communities of 1000 or more population.

I understand that the Federal Government is currently reviewing its oral health strategies, and hope the Federal and State Governments can work together to improve the oral health of Queenslanders. I look forward to hearing what support your Government is able to offer Queenslanders to implement water fluoridation in this State.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mr Ryan Robertson, Policy Advisor, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3234 1191.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP

Minister for Health and Ageing  
16 MAY 2007

Reply by  
 Minister  
 Chief of Staff  
 Adviser  
 P/Sec for MHA  
 Department

Other  
 Campaign  
 Constituent  
 Background Information Required

Urgt by  
 Refer to

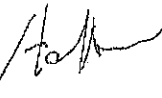
cc. AR IB

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THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING  
Leader of the House of Representatives

The Hon Stephen Robertson MP  
Minister for Health  
GPO Box 48  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister 

Thank you for your letter of 11 May 2007 about possible Commonwealth assistance to help cover capital and recurrent costs associated with new fluoridation plants.

I believe that the fluoridation of water is an important policy issue and support the position set out in *Healthy Mouths Healthy Lives: Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2004-2013*, endorsed by all of the Australian Health Ministers in July 2001.

The National Oral Health Plan notes that fluoridation of public water supplies is the single most effective public health measure for reducing dental caries across the population, with its most pronounced effects amongst those who are disadvantaged and most at risk. The plan recommends extending fluoridation of public water supplies to communities across Australia with populations of 1,000 or more.

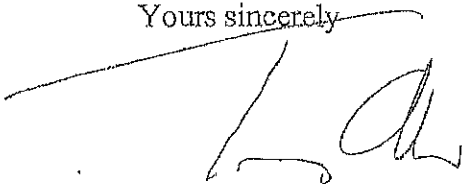
I note that 30 per cent of the Australian population still does not have access to fluoridated water, with Queensland providing fluoridated water to only 5 per cent of its population.

However, the provision of domestic water supplies is a responsibility of local State Governments and there is no Commonwealth financial assistance available.

Queensland's low level of fluoridation relative to other States is a reflection of past policy decisions at a State and local level. While recent efforts in Queensland to extend fluoridated water are commendable, other States have chosen to provide access to fluoridated water without Commonwealth assistance and it is open to your Government to do the same.

I appreciate you writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



TONY ABBOTT

12 JUL 2007