

This article appeared in the Courier Mail on July 19, 2004. Comments in italics.

Bid to Put Fluoride in Water

Brisbane, Australia, may reconsider its opposition to water fluoridation in a bid to reverse the alarming trend of rotten teeth, fillings and even cases of 18-month-old toddlers wearing dentures, reported *The Courier-Mail*.

A working group of representatives of the state's doctors, dentists, and pharmacists will meet Lord Mayor Campbell Newman and Deputy Mayor David Hinchliffe in a bid to convince them that the arguments against fluoridation are emotive, ignorant and without scientific credibility.

The Brisbane City Council last considered Fluoridation at the 1997 fluoridating taskforce set up under then Lord Mayor Jim Soorley, an opponent of the practice.

According to *The Courier-Mail*, the taskforce rejected the arguments for fluoridation advanced by the Australian Medical Association and Australian Dental Association.

Pediatrician John Pearn, a taskforce's member, said that taskforce had had a majority of anti-fluoridation exponents.

"To many on the committee it became obvious what the result was going to be by its constitution. By the way the membership was chosen, it transpired it was a foregone conclusion," Pearn said.

A major study of children's dental records published by *The Courier-Mail* found the average five-year-old Queenslanders had more than two decayed, missing or filled teeth — almost twice the national average.

According to Cr. Newman, any move to add fluoride would need Civic Cabinet's support, and that health groups would have to allay community concern.

"It's up to medical and dental professional associations to make the case. In 1997 they had the opportunity to make their case and the results show they were not able to do that."

Response: Medical and dental groups were able to make a very good case for fluoridation, but this case was simply ignored. See comments below.

AMA state president David Molloy said the claims of the anti-fluoride lobby had been exposed as lacking scientific credibility, including studies linking fluoridation to bone disorders such as osteoporosis.

Mr. Soorley said it was "deceitful" to suggest that his 1997 fluoridating taskforce had been stacked with non-fluoridation advocates. He said the report had been adopted unanimously.

Response: The report was not adopted unanimously. The 1997 Lord Mayor's Taskforce was set up and chaired by Cr Jim Soorley, a strong opponent of water fluoridation. It could hardly claim to be unbiased. The Taskforce was forced to admit that "the weight of scientific evidence overwhelmingly supported the decay reduction effect of water fluoridation", and was not able to demonstrate any significant adverse effects of water fluoridation. It also concluded that the cost benefit of water fluoridation was likely to be significant. Despite this, members decided by a

small majority (52%) to oppose water fluoridation. This political decision was immediately condemned in a dissenting report signed by Drs R Brown and P Jackman, state presidents of the Australian Medical Association and Australian Dental Association, and Prof K Adkins, Executive Dean of the Health Sciences Faculty at the University of Queensland.