



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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FLUORIDATION OF PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (10.02 pm): For many years fluoridation of our water supply has been a contentious issue. For decades local governments, with the best of intentions, have fluoridated our water supplies thinking that they are doing the community a service by ensuring good dental health. The practice of fluoridating water began in the US in the 1950s and this practice then spread to Canada, Australia and other countries. But now fluoridation is almost nonexistent in western continental Europe and has been discontinued in Sweden, Holland, Germany and Finland mainly on account of concerns about its known or potential health hazards.

It has been discovered that fluorides hexafluorosilic acid, the most commonly used fluoridation additives to drinking water, contain other toxic substances including lead, beryllium, mercury and cadmium. Beryllium has proven to be carcinogenic. It is wrong to fluoridate a water supply for the prevention of tooth decay. There is much debate world wide about the addition of fluoride to prevent tooth decay, and most reports find that improved tooth decay rates cannot be credited to fluoride added to the water supply.

People can have perfectly good teeth without adding fluoride to the water supply. Adding fluoride to the water assumes that tooth decay is inevitable and that the only way in which to tackle the problem is mass fluoridation, which is ridiculous. The side effects of fluoridation must also be considered. Some reports have shown a higher rate of bone cancer, an increased risk of bone fractures and a risk of organ damage and kidney disease in fluoridated areas. People can have strong, healthy teeth without decay and without having to drink fluoridated water. So why force the entire population to ingest something that has already discontinued in places such as Sweden, Holland, Germany and Finland because of potential health concerns? There are many other alternatives to mass fluoridation that can prevent tooth decay and do not carry the risks that fluoridation poses.

Money should be spent on identifying and attacking the cause of tooth decay: poor diet, dental hygiene in children and greater access to public dentists for everyone. In today's world, only a fraction of the population now drink artificially fluoridated water. If politicians and people want fluoride in their drinking water, then they should lobby to have it supplied to their local shops and purchase it there. I do not support this bill.