



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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WATER FLUORIDATION BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (12.53 pm): Fluoridation is one of the most widely researched public health measures in the world and has overwhelming support from all the major medical and dental bodies here and overseas. The World Health Organisation, the Australian Dental Association and the Australian Medical Association are among those which have endorsed fluoride as an effective preventative dental health measure.

Research has shown that Queensland six-year-olds have nearly 30 per cent more decay in their baby teeth than the national average, with a similar result for permanent teeth in 12-year-olds. By contrast, a 1996 study in Townsville, where the water has been fluoridated since 1964, showed a significant difference in the level of tooth decay in children—with about 40 per cent less decay than in Brisbane children. Elsewhere in Queensland the communities of Dalby, Mareeba, Moranbah and Bamaga have fluoridated water supplies, and people in every other state and territory have been drinking fluoridated water for more than 30 years—resulting in significant oral health benefits for residents. I was born in Dalby and my family lived there for a further three years. I therefore have personal experience of drinking fluoridated water at a young age.

Mr Shine: They still remember you out there.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: They do still remember me out there. Both of my older brothers, who spent even more of these key early years in Dalby, had excellent teeth. I have read much literature on the subject of fluoridation and I concur with the experts that there is no credible evidence to link water fluoridation with adverse health effects. This information, along with the significant public support of health professionals and my own personal experience with fluoridated water, allows me to be very comfortable indeed with my decision to wholeheartedly support the fluoridation of the whole of Queensland's water supply. The member for Algester made a very important point about the social justice measures involved in ensuring the fluoridation of the public water supply rather than relying on other methods of accessing the fullest range of oral health, and this point is particularly important in my decision making on this as well.

Other than the member for Algester, I do want to acknowledge the contribution of my honourable friend the member for Surfers Paradise. I acknowledge his factual account of the benefits of fluoridation. However, I cannot ignore the partisan slights of the member for Surfers Paradise in relation to Labor's record on flouridation.

A government member: Will you drill some holes in his argument?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I will attempt to drill some holes in his argument. Historically, this issue was regarded by both sides of the House as a matter for determination by local authorities. I am glad that the coalition has agreed to join the Bligh government in overriding local councils on this important public health issue. However, on this issue, as with many others, it appears that a prospective single united conservative party has many holes in it. The member for Surfers Paradise told the House that water fluoridation is not 'mass medication', yet the member for Warrego described it in just those terms. The rickety coalition compromise—represented by the amendment to provide reverse osmosis water filters—just reminds us of

the unscientific conspiracy theories entertained by the Nationals' leadership, including the feminisation of fish.

I have also seen—and I hesitate to use this term, but it is the best collective noun I could come up with—a book depository of conspiracy theories about the dangers of water fluoridation. The member for Surfers Paradise referred to a long list of googled conspiracies and this inspired me to seek out one more. I have to say that the most credible fringe theory I have seen was authored by right-wing American satirist PJ O'Rourke. From his 1995 compilation *Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut*, I refer to his flow chart entitled 'How Fluoridated Water Turns Kids into Communists'. For the information of all members and the entertainment of Queenslanders, I table a copy of the flow chart.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'How Fluoridated Water Turns Kids into Communists'.

According to this satirical piece, there are a number of paths from the fluoridation of water supply to young people joining the Communist Party. While some honourable members may make reflections on representatives of the city of Townsville in this parliament, I can confirm that the resident of Townsville and only Communist Party member of the Queensland parliament, barrister Fred Paterson, joined the CPA well before the fluoridation of Townsville's water supply in 1964. I am, however, attracted to the logic of the last path cited in Mr O'Rourke's flow chart. He starts out with—

City government puts fluoride in public water supply

That moves on to—

Improved dental health results in fewer visits to dentist's office

I know that the member for Surfers Paradise is particularly concerned about that! The flow chart then moves on as follows—

Fewer visits to dentist's office make for less frequent exposure to *Reader's Digest*

Less frequent exposure to *Reader's Digest* causes child to be insufficiently alerted to the dangers of Communism

Child is thus an easy target for Communist propaganda

Improper associates and dangerous propaganda result in child joining the Communist Party

I commend the bill and fluoridated drinking water to the House.