

27 January 2017

Chair

Health Select Committee

Parliament Buildings

Wellington

New Zealand

Dear Sir

### **Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill**

#### Introduction

1. I appreciate the opportunity to provide a submission on the above bill.
2. My experience with CWF goes back to 1966 when my wife was prescribed fluoride tablets during her pregnancy. That was because we were moving out of an area that was fluoridated (Gisborne) to one that was not (Te Puia Springs). Our son was born on 5 November 1966 and by his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday all but 4 of his teeth had been extracted due to the enamel simply crumbling. At the time the doctors and dentists could not tell us what was happening and various explanations were mooted but no solution found. It was not until around 4 years ago, that I found that excess fluoride led to fluorosis and that can cause tooth enamel to flake. Interestingly the labelling on fluoride tablets now warn that they are not to be ingested by pregnant women and they are no longer widely used.
3. It is obvious that what was the accepted practise in the 1960s is, considering advances in the science behind the decisions made, no longer acceptable. The same is true of DDT, lead in petrol and a raft of other toxic substances. Unfortunately, once a concept becomes the status quo it is an uphill battle to change it.

Regarding the amending bill the problem that led to the move to transfer decision making power from local authorities to the DHBs remains and that is those making the decision are reliant on the information they are fed from the defenders of the status quo. In this instant that is the Health Department and the Government. Indeed, a report in the NZ Herald in 2011 confirms the situation.

*The pro-fluoridation policy of the Waikato District Health Board will remain, despite opposition from a board member who voted against it. Arguments from Andrew Buckley about the side-effects of fluoridating Hamilton's water were dismissed by the community and public health advisory committee chairwoman Sally Christie, who said the committee's role was only to endorse the policy, not debate it.*

*Mr Buckley called for a report into the policy in September, and yesterday said he was concerned that a presentation to the committee on water fluoridation did not present both sides of the argument. "We're reviewing half the science," Mr Buckley said.*

*He said fluoride had been linked to bone cancer and premature births, but when he tried to question Waikato DHB medical officer of health Felicity Dumble, Mrs Christie said the discussion was not a "cross-examination" of Dr Dumble. Mr Buckley gave up when he discovered the health board was legally required to support water fluoridation.*

*The Public Health and Disability Act 2000 requires the direction of district health boards to be consistent with the New Zealand Health Strategy. This specifies that oral health initiatives include support for fluoridation of reticulated water supplies.*

*"So maybe we shouldn't be having this debate because if we opposed it would be illegal," Mr Buckley said.*

NZ Public health professionals are simply doing what public servants do - pursuing the message they are told to pursue. The District Health Boards are bound by legislation to promote fluoridation because that is what is demanded by the public health Act 2000. The Fluoridation Information provided promotes material that only supports community water fluoridation. There is no balance and it is notable around the world that professionals who step out of line are ostracised and hounded for doing so. Talk to some of the increasing number of dentists who express concern about the impact of fluorosilicic acid (Hfa) on teeth and they may tell you how hard their life becomes when they blow the whistle.

The MOH and the DHBs all cite the 2000 York review as the bee's knees in absolute proof for the safety, benefit and cost effectiveness of adding an industrial waste by-product, which cannot be legally disposed of into waterways, into our drinking water to treat the disease of tooth decay. The Chair of the review panel, Professor Sheldon, wrote a reiteration of the reviews findings which stated "The review did not show water fluoridation to be safe. The quality of the research was too poor to establish with confidence whether there are potentially important adverse effects in addition to the high level of fluorosis".

The York review also found that "There was little evidence to show that water fluoridation has reduced social inequalities in dental health."

Given that Professor Sheldon was the founding director of the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at York University I would give more weight to his views than those of public servants simply pushing the spin and dogma that is promoted ahead of any substantive evidence to support fluoridation. In light of the revelation that the York review identifies substantial issues and shortcomings around fluoridation why is the NZ health service selectively using it to promote the status quo? Why are the studies and research called for by the York review, the US Fort Collins report and indeed by the recent NZ Government Health Select Committee on Oral Health not being done?

Until the evidence is available as to the upside or downside of fluoridation the concerns of both sides in this debate will not be fully informed and nothing will be settled.

Summary

The Bill is flawed in that it removes the requirement for consultation, which is a denial of the democratic process. It imposes non-compliance charges on ratepayers and is designed to ensure the extension of Community Water Fluoridation regardless of any health dis-benefits.

It puzzles and concerns me that this Bill is proceeding even though less than 5 percent of the global populace have CWF and much of the material in favour is based on data from research and studies conducted prior to 2000.

Reliance on a mantra of “Safe, Beneficial and Cost Effective” to formulate fluoridation legislation is not the answer.

I request to speak to my submission.

Trevor Crosbie