

## DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

11<sup>th</sup> May 2004

<b>DCCS8</b>	<b>MID NORTH COAST AREA HEALTH SERVICE – “TEETH FOR LIFE” CAMPAIGN FILE: H2-2      TIH</b>
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### SUMMARY:

Council has received representations from the following organizations to participate in the “Teeth for Life” campaign:

- The Australian Dental Association
- Council for Social Service of NSW
- The Cancer Council NSW
- Andrew Stoner MP

A copy of the Australian Dental Association’s letter, which is representative of them all, is attached at [\(Appendix C\)](#) together with the Australian Dental Association’s information package on the benefits of fluoridation.

Councillors may be aware that the Kempsey Shire has declined to accept previous offers to have the water supplies fluoridated the latest being in 2001.

The scientific evidence is conclusive in as much as tooth decay is reduced in populations where the water supplies are fluoridated.

At a tele-conference hosted by the MNCAHS on 20/4/04 and attended by the Mayor and Director of Corporate and Community Services it was made evidently obvious that our community has a very serious oral health crisis that can no longer be ignored. Although several strategies were canvassed to help the situation the overwhelming benefits of a fluoridated water supply were stressed.

Council's insurers have advised:

"If Council resolved to fluoridate the water, there would be no additional premium contribution payable to Statewide Mutual Liability Scheme."

It is understood that the State Government will meet the capital costs of installing the necessary capital equipment, however, the ongoing costs and training of staff and future maintenance of the plant and supplies of the chemicals will probably have to met by Council.

***The Director of Business Enterprise’s Macleay Water Manager reports:***

***Research evidence indicates that adding fluoride to water supplies is beneficial to dental health, especially in children, and there is no***

**detrimental medical side effects from fluoride intake at recommended concentrations. However, there are some facts that Council should be aware of when making the decision to fluoridate the water or not:**

- **There are 3 basic compounds used to fluoridate community drinking water: sodium fluoride crystals, sodium fluorosilicate powder or fluorosilicic acid liquid.**
- **These forms of fluoride are poisons.**
- **Fluoride is classified as dangerous goods and requires special storage, transport and handling systems.**
- **The Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1957 has many conditions, which impose significant responsibilities on water authorities that fluoridate and penalties for non-compliance. Some extracts are attached as Appendix D but, in summary the provisions mean:**
  - **Council must not increase or decrease capacity of a water supply or make alterations to the water supply works in close proximity to the dosing point without permission.**
  - **Must sample and analyze each system daily and report results to the Director-General monthly together with a sample.**
  - **Only qualified operators to operate dosing plant and no unqualified person to enter the premises.**
  - **Once approval to fluoridate is given the Water Authority cannot discontinue fluoridating without approval by the Secretary.**
- **The course to gain qualification for fluoride is a 5 day course with university-level mathematics. Only academically inclined people pass the course and most outdoor staff fail. We would need to have at least three operators, two fitters and two electricians trained so they could operate and maintain seven dosing systems. Cost of this is in the vicinity of \$21,000.**
- **MNCAHS (Terry Clout) indicated to Council that the estimate capital cost of installation of plant was around \$800,000. Based on a 20 year life for this equipment, depreciation is \$40,000 per year. Since separate buildings to house the equipment would be required (so unqualified people do not enter), I believe the amount of \$800,000 is insufficient.**
- **Land would be required at Stuarts Point for the facility.**
- **The operation and maintenance of the seven facilities is estimated to cost around \$160,000 per year. This is based on 12 hrs per day, 7 days per week, 52 weeks per year. It comprises:**

<b>Labour</b>	<b>\$135,000 (includes overtime, travel time)</b>
<b>Vehicles</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>
<b>Chemicals</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>

<b>Parts, admin, etc</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>

- **For, say, 25,000 people this equates to \$6.40 per person per annum plus \$2 per head depreciation (above), totals \$8.40 per head or about \$20 per assessment. This represents a rate increase of around 5%.**
- **There are potential health risks for operators who are working with concentrated fluoride chemicals therefore OH&S ramifications to manage the risks could be significant.**
- **There is some potential for Council to be exposed to future claims from people for any adverse effects of fluoride.**
- **Fluoride can cause minimal increase in the corrosivity of some water which can lead to damage to infrastructure.**
- **Extra staff and vehicles (1.5) will be needed to operate the systems**
- **If the need arises to take the dam off-line (algae, taste and odours) the water supply to Kempsey and the Lower Macleay would be unfluoridated unless an extra fluoridation facility was provided for this contingency.**

**Financial Implications of this report:**

**An ongoing annual cost of around \$200,000 (or an increase of approximately eight cents/kilolitre in the water usage charge) for operation, maintenance and depreciation (asset replacement), once capital costs have been met.**

**Reduced need to use reactive medical procedures that are costly and resource intensive. "Prevention is better than cure".**

**Social Implications of this report:**

**If the recommendation is adopted to immediately commence to fluoridate the water supplies and to embrace all of the initiatives of the "Teeth for Life" campaign then our community will enjoy a fairly dramatic improvement in oral health both immediately and for future generations. It must be stressed that "tooth decay, just like obesity and heart disease is preventable" and a fluoridated water supply is the most effective way of ensuring a good start for dental health in the population.**

**There will be significant protest from some sections of the community.**

**Environmental Implications of this report**

**Dangerous chemicals (fluoride) will be stored, transported and used throughout the shire, sometimes in National Parks and natural environments, where any spillage could cause some environmental**

*damage. These isolated installations are sometimes subject to vandalism / break-ins.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the NSW Health Dept be advised that Council believes that fluoridation of the water supply is a Public Health issue and that if the Department wishes to have the present 7 Kempsey Shire (Macleay Water) supplies fluoridated. Council would agree provided that the NSW Health Department;
  - \* Fully fund all capital works required, including land acquisition and buildings as required.
  - \* Fully fund training of 8 operators, including wages.
  - \* Contribute \$40,000 per annum to cover depreciation and asset replacement of the capital infrastructure.
  - \* Supply two vehicles to facilitate the operation of the systems as part of the capital infrastructure.
  - \* Field all complaints and protests from the community regarding fluoridation of the water supply.
  - \* The Secretary grants blanket approval to shut down fluoridisation dosing system if the dam has to be taken off live under the Dam Management Plan.
2. That Council actively embraces the initiatives of the “Teeth for Life” campaign.
3. That extra resources (labour) be approved for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the systems, once built and commissioned.

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**T I Hannam**  
**DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**