

## Legislative Council

Tuesday, 14 September 2010, Page 773

### WATER FLUORIDATION

**The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON** (15:06): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the minister representing the Minister for Health questions on fluoridation of public water supplies.

Leave granted.

**The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON:** On 8 February 2007, the minister stated in the other place:

While some people have made claims about the risk of fluoridation, these claims are not scientifically proven.

Dr Phyllis Mullenix, who was the head of the Toxicology Department of the Forsyth Dental Centre in Boston, the world-renowned dental research institute affiliated with the Harvard Medical School, stated in a letter discussing statements made by the Calgary Regional Health authority:

As a toxicologist involved in fluoride research for over 10 years, I was stunned by the CRHA's glib comments proclaiming water fluoridation safe. The '50 years' of studies about fluoride safety do not exist. The 'ongoing intensive research on fluorides and fluoridation' does not exist, certainly none investigating safety.

In 1995, I and three colleagues published a paper about the effects of fluoride on the central nervous system in the international journal *Neurotoxicology and Teratology* and that paper was published in a peer-reviewed medical journal as well as subsequent other papers, showing there is a lack of evidence that fluoridation is safe relative to brain function. The National Federation for Federal Employees, representing the scientists, lawyers and engineers at the United States Environmental Protection Agency, recognises the risks for neurological impairment by fluoridation.

Dr Doug N. Everingham, former health minister in the Whitlam government, wrote to the current Minister for Health, stating:

There is more objective investigation of incidence of bone and joint problems, intellectual and other cumulative ill effects of fluoridation in mainland Europe than in fluoridating countries. There is a reluctance to include critical research and researchers in official investigations; for example, in the delay in Harvard's releasing Bassin's findings of young males' osteosarcoma incidence.

These are just two of hundreds of letters that I have received over the last two weeks from people who have done extensive research, and been published, into the harms of fluoridation. My questions to the minister are:

1. Will the minister provide to the people of Mount Gambier and South Australia the research that is being used to justify the further expansion of water fluoridation to that area before the plant is online?

2. Is the minister aware that a number of dental health professionals provided Dr Gunliff with up-to-date research from the USA on the harms of fluoride, and was this research considered in the decision to forge ahead with forced fluoridation in Mount Gambier?

3. In January of this year, Dr Gunliff, on ABC radio, made the commitment to have a meeting in Mount Gambier to discuss the concerns about fluoridation before the plant went online. Will the minister guarantee that a meeting being held on 9 October will be attended by Dr Gunliff and his advisers to have an open debate with health care professionals about fluoridation?

4. Can the minister explain why interested residents of Mount Gambier are not allowed to see inside a shed that has been purpose-built for the fluoridation plant, as they have been told that the equipment has not yet arrived and the shed is empty, so they cannot have a look inside an empty shed?

5. Is the minister planning to install the equipment and turn on the fluoridation without informing the people of Mount Gambier of the date that fluoridation will commence?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO** (Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister for the City of Adelaide) (15:09): The fluoridation of water has been available for over 50 years, so there is a great deal of evidence and research around the positive effects of fluoridation. As I said, there is well established evidence over a very long period of time, and we know that many benefits associated with fluoridation are well established on the record. However, I am very pleased to refer those questions to the Minister for Health in another place and bring back a response.

**The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON** (15:11): As a supplementary question, given that the minister has cited research that she is obviously familiar with, can she now cite to this place the research that she says backs up fluoridation of our water supply?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO** (Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister for the City of Adelaide) (15:11): I do not have the specific articles here with me—

The Hon. A. Bressington interjecting:

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO:** —but I have read the questions and have been engaged in the debates for and against fluoridation over many years. I am a former health care professional. I was involved in the issues around fluoridation 20-odd years ago when I was practising in health, so I have read about them and have been involved and engaged in those arguments over many years. Just because I do not have particular research in front of me at the moment to cite specific examples does not mean that I have not read any. I am also aware of arguments against fluoridation. They have been around for a long time as well and, again, I am not able to cite specific research here today. However, the point I was making is that fluoridation of our water has been in place for almost 50 years, and there is a plethora of evidence and research available in relation to the effects of fluoridation.