

Qld's peak medical body, AMAQ, lobbies Cairns Regional Council on fluoridating its water supply

By Samuel Davis

Queensland's peak medical body is calling on Cairns Regional Council to meet with experts to further discuss fluoridating its water supply ahead of a potentially critical meeting on the issue next month. Australian Medical Association of Queensland (AMAQ) president Dr Nick Yim, left, has urged Cairns mayor Amy Eden to meet with Cairns-based health practitioners to discuss the tooth-strengthening mineral's benefits soon. REPORT, PAGE 7

'LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE'



Fluoride push from top doc

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Queensland's peak medical body is calling on Cairns Regional Council to meet with experts to further discuss fluoridating its water supply ahead of a potentially critical meeting on the issue next month. Australian Medical Association of Queensland (AMAQ) president Dr Nick Yim has urged Cairns mayor Amy Eden to meet with Cairns-based health practitioners to discuss the tooth-strengthening mineral's benefits soon. It is understood the council is preparing a report on water

fluoridation with the document expected to be on the agenda at an ordinary meeting in December. But it is uncertain if any recommendations will be included in the report and whether councillors will have an opportunity to vote for or against fluoridating Cairns' water supply at the meeting. Given Queensland's current legislation, Dr Yim said the responsibility rested with councillors to act on the public health measure. "Local councils must act in the best interests of their community based on scientifically backed evidence," he said.

"It is challenging but we live in Australia and we have our own legislation in place. We need to utilise our legislation and I think that's key." Division Five councillor Rob Pyne said that he would vote in favour of fluoride if an opportunity emerged. "I've been listening to the technical experts and all of the public health advice is to have fluoride in the water," Mr Pyne said. "Why should our kids have to accept a worse dental outcome than most other Australians?" Just 26 of Queensland's 77 councils fluoridate their water

with a lack of fluoride contributing to the Sunshine State's poor oral health, Dr Yim said. "One in 10 Queenslanders don't have enough functional teeth to chew food," he said. "That's quite sad. We know that dentition plays a big role in adulthood. "Chronic dental pain can lead to other mental health diagnoses such as anxiety and depression." Cairns, currently the biggest town in Australia without a fluoridated water supply, has seen a 56 per cent increase in children aged 15 or less receiving dental treatment under general anaesthetic in the past two

years. Extensive research showed fluoride's benefits when added to community's water supplies, Dr Yim said. "There's a lot of dangerous misinformation out there that is causing unnecessary concern," he said. "I'd encourage our leaders to look at the evidence and consult with the experts." Earlier this month, the mayor upset regional health practitioners by refusing to meet with Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (CHHHS) to discuss the potential benefits of the use of fluoride. "Currently in Cairns, we'd

love to see the council take on the evidence and have the conversation with local doctors and dentists," Dr Yim said. Deputy mayor Brett Olds has declared he will vote against any measure to add the naturally occurring mineral to the city's water. Queensland introduced water fluoridation legislation in 2008, with fluoride added to all water supplies serving more than 1000 people. But the legislation was changed in 2012, with local governments allowed to remove the mineral from water supplies under then premier Campbell Newman.