



Myth Busters: Implementing Water Fluoridation in Regional Victoria

17th Ministerial Rural Health Forum

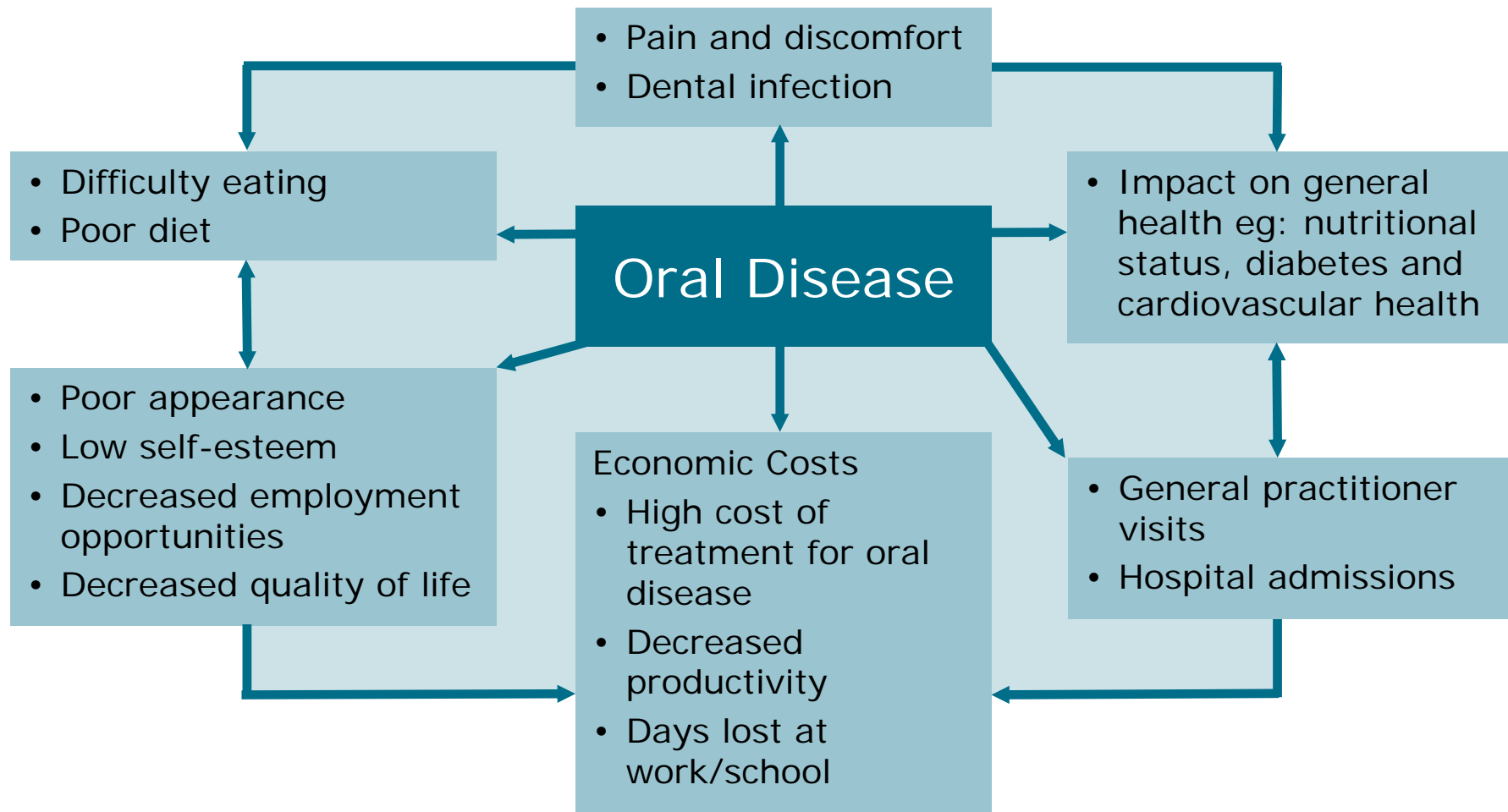
24 July 2009

Dr John Carnie
Chief Health Officer

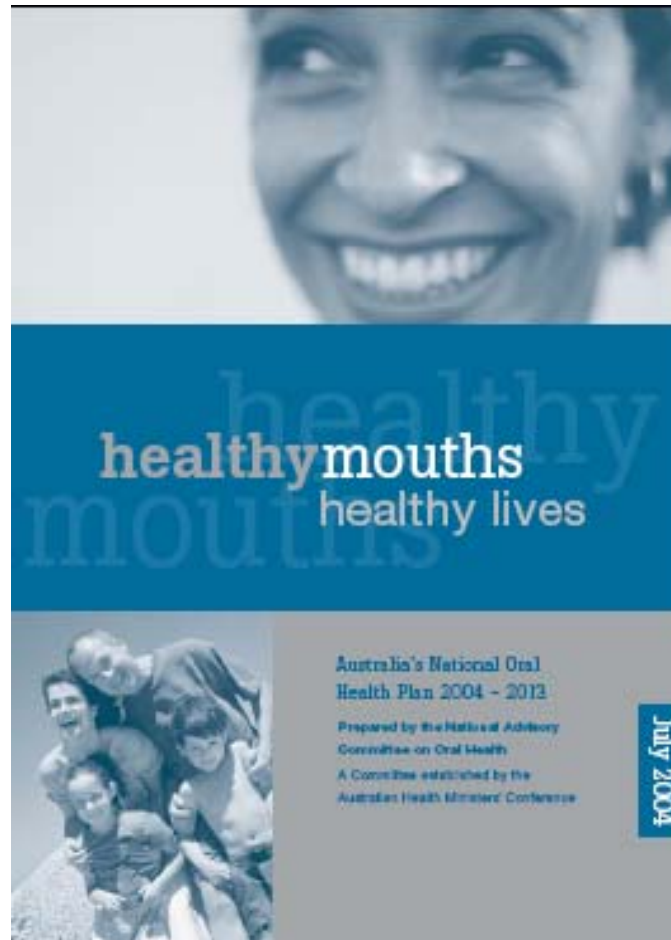
Department of Human Services



Dental decay



National Oral Health Plan



Action area 1.2:

Extend water fluoridation of public water supplies to communities across Australia.

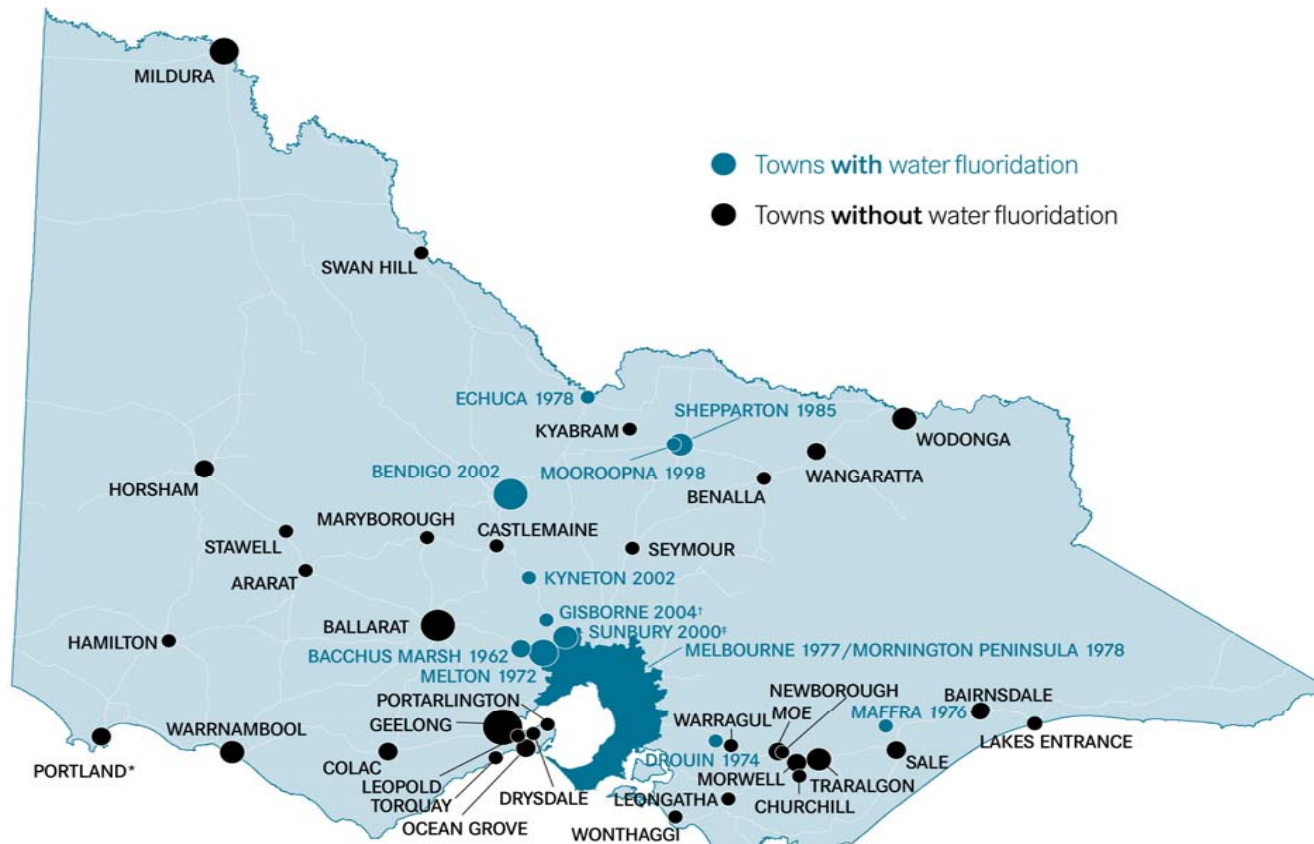
Endorsed by all Health Ministers in 2004

Policy context



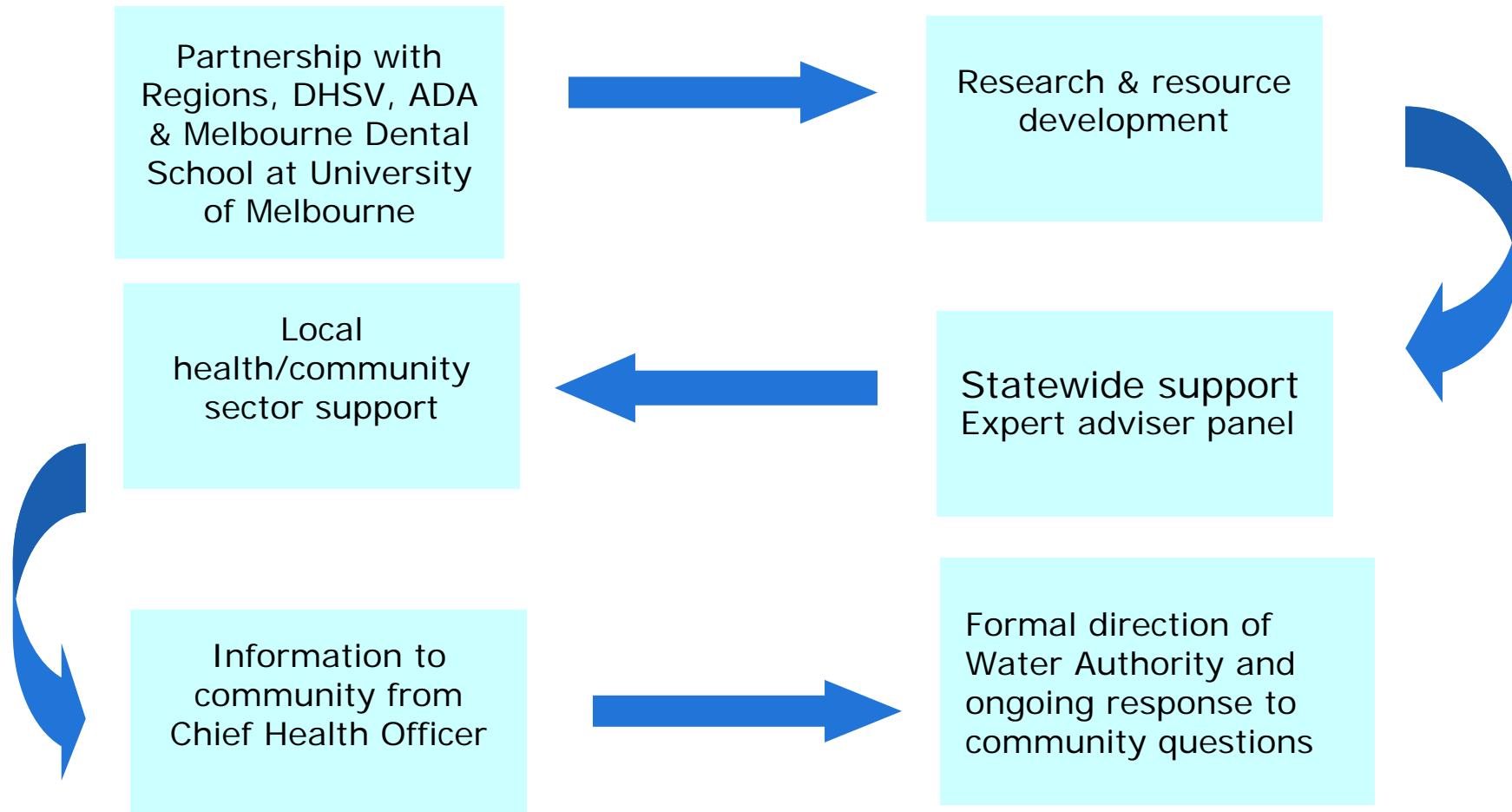
It is Victorian Government policy to extend water fluoridation to those areas of rural and regional Victoria currently without this important public health initiative.

Water fluoridation 2004



* Natural fluoride in the water
 † Gisborne and the surrounding areas of Macedon, Mt Macedon and Riddells Creek are now supplied by metropolitan Melbourne water to ensure security of supply.
 ‡ Sunbury was connected to metropolitan Melbourne water in 2000 to ensure security of supply.

Victorian Fluoridation program



Key considerations



Activity tailored to each community's profile:

- Past water fluoridation experience
- Local supporters / organised opponents
- Local media position
- Local Government / Water Authority
- Other local issues - pipeline interconnections, water security, air emissions

Key success factors



Evidence based policy / resources

Close partnership between Central and Regional Offices

Monitoring, analysing and managing community response - correspondence, information sessions, 1800 number, website, resources

Stakeholder support: political, Regional DHS, expert partners, local supporters, Public Health Branch

Ongoing stakeholder engagement: capacity building

Water fluoridation is safe and effective - supported by



- World Health Organization
- International Association for Dental Research
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- Australian Health Ministers
- Australian Dental Association
- Australian Medical Association
- Public Health Association of Australia
- Diabetes Australia
- General Practice Victoria
- Pharmacy Guild of Australia (Victorian branch)
- Arthritis Australia
- Osteoporosis Australia
- Australian Academy of Science
- Australian Centre for Human Health Risk Assessment

Water fluoridation is safe and effective - supported by



- VicHealth
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Dental Health Services Victoria
- Royal Children's Hospital, Department of Dentistry
- Victorian Dental & Oral Health Therapist Association
- Melbourne Dental School at The University of Melbourne
- Monash University
- RMIT University
- Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing, and Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University
- La Trobe University, School of Dentistry and Oral Health, Bendigo Campus
- Health Issues Centre
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Myths promoted!

No reason
for fluoride

Advocate of death
WHY IS Ray Page advocating forced medication?

Cancer or cavities?

Don't remove
our choice

Sneaky approach

Why put poison
in drinking water?

Fluoride is no magic
bullet on tooth decay

Flaws in fluoride research

Give people a
vote on fluoride

I AM constantly amazed at the ability of the proponents of fluoridation to discount scientific studies opposing their views, and the paternalistic Dr John Carnie goes to the top-of-the-class.

Fluoride not the
answer to dental health

Take your own fluoride,
leave my water alone

One pollutant out,
another comes in

Fluoride bans still in place, says Trades Hall

Democracy at risk
with fluoride push

Chemicals the major
cause of cancer

Fluoride may breach
human rights

Opposition to fluoride grows

Myths busted!



Ineffective

Taste of water

Toxic chemical / poison

Cost

Health effects

- Bones – arthritis and osteoporosis, fractures
- Cancer
- Hypersensitivity / allergy
- Diabetes

Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health



In 2008, ARCPOH studied the effectiveness of water fluoridation on children's dental health across four Australian States (QLD, VIC, TAS and SA).

Dental data from over 16,800 children were examined, including more than 4,000 Victorian children.

Armfield, Spencer, Roberts-Thomson and Slade, 2008. Lifetime exposure to water fluoridation and child experience. Presented at the 86th General Session and Exhibition of the International Association for Dental Research, Toronto, Canada.

Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health



The study also considered a number of other factors:

- tooth brushing history
- use of other fluoride products
- water and food consumption
- use of infant formula
- socioeconomic status.

Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health



5-6 year old children

- ➔ half their lives with optimal water fluoridation
- ➔ 50% less dental decay in their baby teeth

12-13 year old children

- ➔ half their lives with optimal water fluoridation
- ➔ 38% less dental decay in their adult teeth

Other myths busted!



Changes taste and smell of water	Fluoride is tasteless and odourless WHO, 2002: World Water Day – Oral Health
Toxic chemical/poison	Unscheduled at 1 part per million Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons: 2007
Cost effectiveness	\$1 billion savings in 25 year period in Melbourne DHS, 2003: Impact analysis of water fluoridation – prepared by Jaguar Consulting

Osteosarcoma and other cancers



NHMRC 2007 Review:

There is no clear association between water fluoridation and overall cancer incidence or mortality.

Water fluoridation is endorsed by the Cancer Council Victoria

Osteoporosis, arthritis and fractures



No clear association between water fluoridation and hip fractures or all fractures.

Water fluoridation is endorsed by Osteoporosis Australia and Arthritis Australia, which states:

There is no credible evidence, or even theory, to implicate water fluoridation in the cause of any type of arthritis.

Allergy



In my 25 years as a practising allergist I have never seen a patient with a condition that I would attribute to a clinical allergy to fluoride.

Allergy and immunology specialist, Monash University

Diabetes



Diabetes Australia is unaware of any evidence worldwide of a biological link between fluoridated water and insulin regulation.

Diabetes Australia recognises the importance of oral health and dental care as an integral part of diabetes management.

Therefore, Diabetes Australia is committed to *Healthy Mouths Health Lives: Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2004-2013*, which includes the goal of extending water fluoridation to communities across Australia.

Choice Magazine



The claims of those who oppose fluoridation are often based on outdated information, questionable research and selectively picking studies that support their case

Choice Magazine, March 2007.

National Health and Medical Research Council 2007



Fluoridation of drinking water remains the most effective and socially equal way of providing all community members with the benefits of fluoride

NHMRC, 2007: A Systematic Review of the efficacy and safety of fluoridation.

Successful prevention



According to CDC (United States):

Water fluoridation is one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century

CDC, 1999. Achievements in public health, 1900-1999. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 48 (41): 933-940

Successful prevention programs – characteristics



Long-term commitment

Political resolve

Departmental resolve

Partnership between Melbourne and Regional DHS

Stakeholder engagement and capacity building

Continual updating of evidence-base