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Mr John Irving
Project Manager
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Dear Mr Irving

Re: Fluoridation of Water

I refer to your email of 21 February 2005 regarding the NHMRC's current policies on water fluoridation.

NHMRC continues to support the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* statement that fluoridation of public water supplies is an important health measure.

In 1998, HAC commissioned a review of fluoride use in Australia. It had been intended that this review would update NHMRC advice on the topic. However in December 2002, it became apparent that the review was deficient in a number of areas including consideration of fluoride intakes in different age groups, sources of fluoride, and fluoride and oral health. HAC recognised that there were insufficient resources available to complete the additional work required to finalise the report. Consequently, HAC agreed it was necessary to discontinue this work and has no plans to recommence at this stage.

As part of this consideration, HAC sought independent advice on the applicability of the existing guidance on fluoride in the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* (1996). HAC noted the current guideline value for fluoride had remained consistent since 1958 when WHO first published the *International Standards for Drinking Water* and 1972 when NHMRC first published drinking water guidelines. Members accepted the advice that there was little need to amend the existing Guideline or Fact Sheet in the 1996 *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines*. The NHMRC Drinking Water Review Coordinating Group concurred with the comments and consequently did not see a need to amend the guideline value of 1.5 mg/L.

The 1996 *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* have now been replaced by a 2004 edition available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh19syn.htm>

The 2004 *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* note that in water supplies where fluoridation occurs, the target concentration of fluoride should be between 0.7 and 1 mg/L, with lower concentrations applying in warmer climates to allow for a higher average consumption of water.

The NHMRC publication "*Review of Water Fluoridation and Fluoride Intake from Discretionary Fluoride Supplements*" (1999), was archived by the NHMRC in March 2002 as part of a review of NHMRC recommendations and publications. This document is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/advice/pdfcover/fluorcov.htm>

If you have any further queries, please contact me on (02) 6289 9105.

Yours sincerely



¹⁸²
Mr Phil Callan
A/g Director
Health Advisory Section

²⁴ February 2005