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In favour of fluoridation

BY LIZ LANGDALE

THERE'S a chance Port Macquarie residents could have their say on the future of water fluoridation at the September local government election. This is a three part series to help the community make an informed decision if the poll goes ahead.

A Port Macquarie dentist said major decisions such as whether to have a poll on water fluoridation should be made by people with scientific research and not anecdotal stories.

Bruce Coleman has been practicing dentistry for 40 years. He said before the introduction of water fluoridation there were 60 per cent of people over 60-years-old having full dentures.

Today, Dr Coleman said there are thousands of 18 to 50-year-olds who have no fillings at all.

Dr Coleman said there are multiple benefits from having water fluoridation and there are no proven downsides which have been identified by the experts.

There is no need for a poll, Dr Coleman said, as council takes direction from NSW Health.

He said NSW Health has put large amounts of funding into researching fluoride to ensure it's safe for the whole community.

Dr Coleman said if water fluoridation was taken away, it would have devastating consequences, particularly for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds,



BENEFITS OF FLUORIDE: Jodie Robinson, Bruce Coleman and Luke Nancarrow from Hermitage Dental.

who have higher rates of tooth decay.

Australian Dental Association NSW president Dr Kathleen Matthews said with any health issue, it's vital the community is guided

by evidence-based research and the experts, rather than opinions.

Removing fluoride from water supplies, Dr Matthews said, could mean the most vulnerable people in Port

Macquarie will have increased rates of tooth decay.

"Good health starts with what you put in your mouth - we need to care for our teeth," she said.

"The overwhelming expert

evidence shows fluoride helps us do that."

There is extensive data, Dr Matthews said showing Australians of all ages benefit from access to fluoridated drinking water.

"Fluoride benefits children, adults and the elderly," she said.

"It helps prevent tooth decay in everyone who drinks it, even if they don't have access to toothbrushes, toothpaste or appropriate dental care.

"It can help ensure all members of our community, including the vulnerable and those less well-off, have positive oral health outcomes.

"Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in Australian children and adults."