

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Essential Services:

#### Fluoride in the Water

- 1. Which communities in the Northern Territory do not have access to fluoridated water? Please list by community as at 25 March 2019, and include urban / remote classifications.**

The following is a response to questions 1 and 2 collectively.

Power and Water provides fluoridated water to 86% of its drinking water customers across its 92 locations (major and minor centres plus remote communities). Of these 92 locations:

- seven locations have fluoride added by Power and Water (Darwin, Katherine, Angurugu, Maningrida, Umbakumba, Wadeye and Wurruniyanga (Nguiu));
- 71 locations have fluoride found naturally in the source water; and
- there are a further 14 drinking water locations where adjusting the amount of fluoride to an optimal level is under consideration, depending on community acceptance, cost benefits, infrastructure and operational capability:
  - Yulara
  - Galiwinku
  - Lajamanu
  - Ramingining
  - Borroloola
  - Gapuwiyak
  - Milingimbi
  - Santa Teresa
  - Wuglarr (Beswick)
  - Gunbalanya
  - Ngukurr
  - Yirrkala
  - Hermannsburg
  - Numbulwar

- 2. Which communities in the Northern Territory do have access to fluoridated water? Please list by community as at 25 March 2019, and include urban / remote classifications.**

Please refer to question 1

**3. Why isn't fluoridation information published in the Annual Report of the Power and Water Corporation?**

The Annual Report is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Government Owned Corporations Act 2001* and as such is presented as a broad ranging report on the financial and operational aspects of Power and Water.

**4. Will you include fluoridation information in the next annual report of the Power and Water Corporation?**

No. Power and Water produces a dedicated annual report on Drinking Water Quality, which provides a far better medium to inform and educate the community on all aspects of drinking water quality, including fluoride levels. A copy of the report can be found at:

[https://www.powerwater.com.au/news\\_and\\_publications/reports/water\\_quality\\_reports](https://www.powerwater.com.au/news_and_publications/reports/water_quality_reports)

**5. How much does the Government expend on fluoridating drinking water in the Northern Territory in a financial year? Please provide figures for the last three financial years.**

Power and Water spends a total of \$1.6 million per annum to fluoridate drinking water in its seven locations.

This includes \$1 million per annum in Darwin and Katherine and \$600,000 in Angurugu, Maningrida, Umbakumba, Wadeye and Wurruniyanga (Nguiu).

**6. Can you confirm it is the policy of the Government to add fluoride to the water of every community with a population over 600?**

The policy referred to in the question is the responsibility of the Department of Health as the regulator of drinking water quality in the Northern Territory.

Power and Water provides the following response based on its understanding of that policy but recommends that this question be referred to the Department of Health for a formal response:

*The current policy position is informed by a cost benefit analysis, which states the ideal cost-benefit ratio would be achieved in the Northern Territory by fluoridating communities with a population of 600 or greater, where naturally occurring levels of fluoride are below beneficial levels. The policy does not mandate fluoridation.*