

# A new campaign against fluoridation

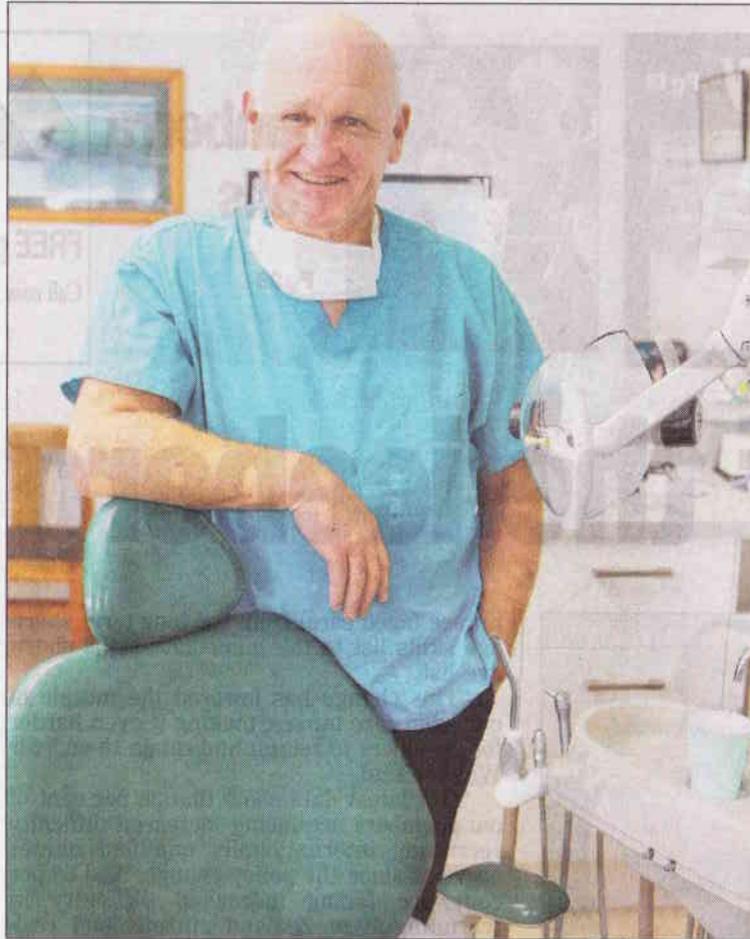
A nationwide campaign has been launched to oppose the Health (Fluoridation of Drinking Water) Amendment Bill, currently before Parliament.

Rethink Fluoride brings together those who oppose the fluoridation of drinking water, many of whom made submissions to the Health Select Committee considering the Bill.

Retired dentists Dr Lawrie Brett and Dr John Jukes said that the vast majority of public submissions opposed the Bill, and are heading the campaign. They said international peer-reviewed research had shown fluoridation to be unsafe and ineffective, which was why it was not endorsed by the majority of international health authorities.

The Fluoridation of Drinking Water Bill, introduced by the previous government, sought to shift decision-making from local councils to district health boards, under the direction ("or at least heavy influence") of the Ministry of Health, with no public input into decisions. Former Health Minister Annette King acknowledged that as effectively mandatory fluoridation by proxy in her speech at the Bill's first reading, Drs Brett and Jukes said.

The coalition behind Rethink Fluoride also claimed that, if the



Retired Whangārei dentist Lawrie Brett, co-leader of a campaign against fluoridation.

PICTURE / JOHN STONE

Bill became law, New Zealand would become one of only three countries in the world with mandatory fluoridation without addressing the larger issues arising from fluoridation.

Fluoride Free NZ has lent its support to the campaign, and provided seed funding.

Rethink Fluoride's objective is to encourage Parliament not to proceed with the Bill, and to take a fresh look at the fluoridation issue, especially important given a growing body of evidence pointing to harm from fluoride even at levels that had previously been believed to be safe.

The campaign will use social media, public relations and networking to raise awareness about fluoridation and to promote debate.

"New Zealand is one of a tiny minority of countries that fluoridate drinking water, as a result of ties with the USA," Drs Brett and Jukes said.

"Less than five per cent of the world's population is fluoridated, with more and more cities stopping every year. Unfortunately, New Zealand, as this legislation demonstrates, is apparently intent on travelling in the opposite direction.

"We believe that, were New Zealanders better aware of the facts about fluoridation, our

parliamentarians would be less inclined to disregard the body of evidence against the fluoridation of our drinking water."

In 2014 *The Lancet* had classified fluoride as a neurotoxin, while 52 of 59 studies that looked at fluoride exposure and effects on brain function found that damage included lowering of IQ, behavioural deficits, nervous disorders and memory disruption.

"Now that the Supreme Court has ruled that fluoridation is compulsory medical treatment, and this breach of the Bill of Rights Act can only be justified if there are real benefits and no significant risks, it is essential that this balancing be re-evaluated in light of current scientific evidence," they said.

"Just as we had to rethink lead in petrol, which is estimated to have lowered IQ by five points, we need to rethink water fluoridation. In fact we have more scientific evidence against fluoride than we had against both DDT and lead in petrol when they were banned."

Rethink Fluoride believed that most people who investigated fluoridation with an open mind would conclude that parliamentarians should adopt the precautionary principle, suspend fluoridation of drinking water and reject the legislation.