MA "Alan" Simmonds passed away on June 12 1983. Few ADAQ members appreciate that Simmonds had an important place within Queensland’s fluoride-history. A 1929 engineering graduate from The University of Queensland, Simmonds progressed to Engineer-in-Charge at the Brisbane City Council’s Mt Crosby Water Plant. In 1949, he joined the Queensland Department of Local Government, as Executive Engineer (Chemical) where, at the 1952 Annual Conference of Local Authority Engineers, he advocated the fluoridation of Townville’s water supply. Simmonds’ views did not carry departmental endorsement. Furthermore Queensland health department officials and the Australian Dental Association (Queensland Branch) rebuffed the proposal with valid scientific argument. The Townsville plan was premature in that there were no NHMRC guidelines in place. However, in a manuscript published in the 1952 Queensland Dental Journal, Simmonds displayed a detailed knowledge of fluoridation including contemporaneous material on dosage variation related to age and climate. This paper exposed his enthusiasm, persistence and ability to network within government departments, particularly the powerful agrarian bureaucracy, which, at that time, was concerned about the influence of artesian fluoride on the pastoral industry. Simmonds was clearly disappointed by Queensland’s fluoride-hesitancy and it is arguable that Simmonds was the state’s first water fluoridation advocate.

Not without a sense of humour and innovation, Simmonds (1950) wrote “cucurbitaceous rhabdomancy” for the Journal of the American Water Works Association, where, tongue-in-cheek, he enunciated a plan to divine quality watermelons prior to their purchase from the green-grocer. On a more serious note, Simmonds (1955) authored the unpublished paper, Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies: A Water Engineer’s Point of View, which was a detailed engineering report on fluoridation in Queensland. With respect to the implementation of fluoridation, the report concluded, “As engineers we merely await an instruction from those in authority.” Although many of Simmonds’ Local Government records were destroyed in the 1974 Brisbane flood, his personal archives confirmed a perennial commitment to water fluoridation. While he initially relied on information from the American Water Works Association, Simmonds later possessed files that involved the American and Australian Dental Associations, the NHMRC and some of Queensland’s leading health officials.

In 1964, Simmonds founded a private consultancy practice and laboratory, later known as Simmonds & Bristow Pty Ltd, which enlarged on these functions to allow investigation of water, sewerage and industrial wastewater problems. Simmonds was responsible for the planning and infrastructure of a fluoridation plant at Dalby. His intimate knowledge of fluoride levels within artesian systems precipitated an interest in defluoridation technologies, especially in northwest Queensland. By 1976, Simmonds’ curriculum vitae was impressive: Fellowship of the Institution of Engineers, the Royal Australian Chemical Institute and the Institution of Water Engineers and Scientists; Honorary Life Member of the Institute of Engineers (UK), the Royal Chemical Institute (UK), and the American and Australian Water and Waste-Water Associations; and recipient of the Corrosion Medal awarded by the Australasian Corrosion Association.

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