

## 11.7 Policy (New) - Drinking Water Quality

**POLICY NAME:** DRAFT  
Drinking Water Quality

**POLICY REF:**

**MEETING ADOPTED:** Resolution No.

**POLICY HISTORY:**



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**OBJECTIVE**

Provide an effective Drinking Water Quality Management System to ensure water produced meets *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) 2004*.

**BACKGROUND****Need for a Policy**

Organisational support and long-term commitment by senior management is the foundation to implementation of an effective system for drinking water quality management. Successful implementation requires:

- an awareness and understanding of the importance of drinking water quality management and how decisions affect the protection of public health;
- the development of an organisational philosophy that fosters commitment to continual improvement and cultivates employee responsibility and motivation;
- the ongoing and active involvement of senior management to maintain and reinforce the importance of drinking water quality management to all employees as well as those outside the organisation.

Development of a drinking water quality policy is an important step in formalising the level of service to which Ballina Shire Council is committed. It will increase the focus on water quality management throughout the organisation. The policy provides the basis on which all subsequent actions can be judged. It defines the organisation's commitments and priorities relating to drinking water quality.

The policy forms the basis for development of more detailed policies and implementation strategies to support the effective management of drinking water quality (e.g. appropriate staffing, training of employees, provision of adequate financial resources, active participation and reporting protocols).

**Australian Drinking Water Guidelines**

The NSW Government has approved the ADWG 2004 (Guidelines) for implementation as a model of best practice in New South Wales. The Guidelines are a joint publication of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the National Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMCC).

The Guidelines define the quality of water suitable for human consumption, and provide advice on protecting water supplies. The Guidelines provide a solid foundation for assessing water quality by specifying health-based and aesthetic criteria as well as describing the philosophy of a multiple barrier approach from catchment to tap to ensure the safety of the water. This is embodied in the Guidelines as the "Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality".

The Guidelines are directed by seven fundamental principles vital to ensuring safe drinking water quality:

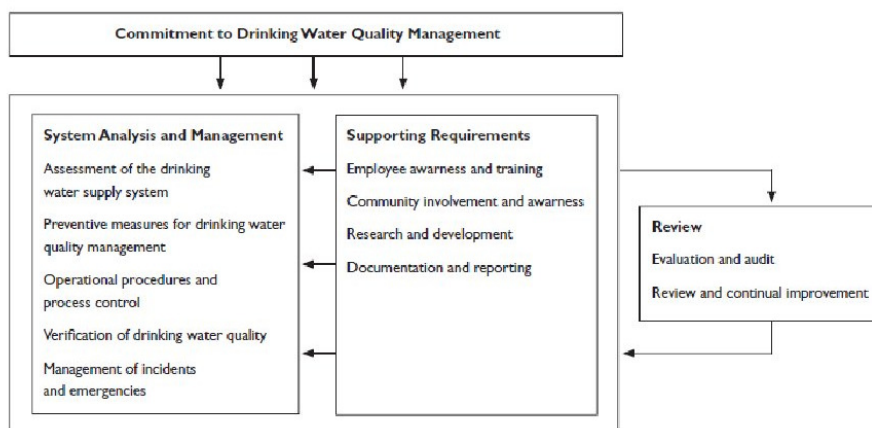
- The greatest risks to consumers of drinking water are pathogenic microorganisms. Protection of water sources and treatment are of paramount importance and must never be compromised.
- The drinking water system must have, and continuously maintain, robust multiple barriers appropriate to the level of potential contamination facing the raw water supply.

- Any sudden or extreme change in water quality, flow or environmental conditions (e.g. extreme rainfall or flooding) should arouse suspicion that drinking water might become contaminated.
- System operators must be able to respond quickly and effectively to adverse monitoring signals.
- System operators must maintain a personal sense of responsibility and dedication to providing consumers with safe water, and should never ignore a customer complaint about water quality.
- Ensuring drinking water safety and quality requires the application of a considered risk management approach.

The Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality is a preventive approach to assuring water quality. The Framework addresses four general areas describing good management of a water supply system:

- **Commitment to drinking water quality management.**
- **System analysis and management:** Understanding the entire water supply system, the hazards and events that can compromise drinking water quality, and the preventive measures and operational control necessary for assuring safe and reliable drinking water.
- **Supporting requirements:** Activities and attitudes that support management of the supply system such as employee training, community involvement, and validation of the effectiveness of processes.
- **Review:** The evaluation and audit of the effectiveness of the management system, and the adoption of improvements based on the evaluation.

The Guidelines give greater detail on how the Framework can be incorporated into the activities of a water utility. Participation in the NSW Drinking Water Monitoring Program helps water utilities to satisfy several elements of the Framework. Figure 1 is a diagram of the Framework, showing the interactions of its different elements.



**Figure 1 Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality**

## Part 5 Public Health Act 2010

The Public Health Act 2010 provides the NSW regulatory mechanism for compliance with the ADWG. This has recently been embodied in Part 5 of the (Draft) Public Health Regulation:

### *Part 5 Safety measures for drinking water*

#### *27 Quality assurance programs*

*(1) For the purposes of section 25 (1) of the Act, a quality assurance program must address the elements of the Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality (as set out in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines published by the National Health and Medical Research Council) that are relevant to the operations of the supplier of drinking water concerned.*

*(2) A supplier of drinking water must provide a copy of its quality assurance program to the Director-General.*

*(3) The Director-General may arrange for the review of a quality assurance program of a supplier of drinking water at any time.*

*(4) The Director-General may make quality assurance programs and any reviews of such programs publicly available.*

## DEFINITIONS

This section should list unique, unfamiliar, technical terms or terms with special meanings to assist the reader's understanding of the policy.

## SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to:

- Council employees
- Councillors
- Community members
- Council owned-businesses
- Committees of Council
- Consultants/Contractors

## RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Related documents, policies and legislation:

- NSW Public Health Act 2010.
- (Draft) NSW Public Health Regulation 2011.
- NHMRC / NRMCC Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004. (Draft 2011 Guideline)
- Ballina Shire Urban Water Management Strategy.
- Community Strategic Plan 2010-2025.
- Strategic Business Plan for Water Supply (2010)

- Developer Servicing Plan for Water Supply 2012
- Agreement with Rous Bulk Supply July 2008

## **POLICY**

Ballina Shire Council is committed to managing its water supply effectively to provide a safe, high-quality drinking water that consistently meets the NHMRC/NRMMC *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines*, consumer needs and expectations, and other regulatory requirements. To achieve this, in partnerships with stakeholders and relevant agencies, Ballina Shire Council will:

- manage water quality at all points along the delivery chain from source water (through supply agreements where the source water is managed by Rous Water) to the consumer;
- use a risk-based approach in which potential threats to water quality are identified and balanced;
- integrate the needs and expectations of our consumers, stakeholders, regulators and employees into our planning;
- establish regular monitoring of the quality of drinking water and effective reporting mechanisms to provide relevant and timely information, and promote confidence in the water supply and its management;
- develop appropriate contingency planning and incident response capability;
- participate in appropriate research and development activities to ensure continued understanding of drinking water quality issues and performance;
- contribute to the debate on setting industry regulations and guidelines, and other standards relevant to public health and the water cycle;
- continually improve our practices by assessing performance against corporate commitments and stakeholder expectations.

Ballina Shire Council will implement and maintain a drinking water quality management system consistent with the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* to effectively manage the risks to drinking water quality.

All managers and employees involved in the supply of drinking water are responsible for understanding, implementing, maintaining and continuously improving the drinking water quality management system.

## **REVIEW**

The Drinking Water Quality Policy is to be reviewed every four years.