

» potable water for human consumption



This fact sheet outlines the requirements for potable water to be supplied for human activities

Suppliers of water must take all measures to ensure that water is safe to use and consume.

» ***What is potable water?***

Potable water is defined as water of a quality suitable for drinking, cooking, and for personal hygiene.

Potable water is generally supplied and monitored by a water catchment or supply authority, and regulated by health authorities. They are responsible for ensuring that the quality of the water supply is maintained at the highest of standards for human consumption.

» ***What are the risks?***

Harmful microorganisms are by far the largest health risk associated with drinking water. It is therefore paramount that water sources are protected and treated to the highest criteria.

» ***What are the laws?***

Public Health Act 2010/Public Health Regulation 2012

Water suppliers, including water utilities, water carters and private water suppliers are regulated under the *Public Health Act 2010* and the *Public Health Regulation 2012*.

Under the *Public Health Act 2010*, water suppliers must supply water that is fit for human consumption. They must also establish and adhere to a Quality Assurance Program (QAP). A Quality Assurance Program is a documented drinking water management system that uses a risk management approach to assist private water suppliers provide water that is safe to use.

The *Public Health Regulation 2012* requires that the QAP must address the elements in the drinking water quality framework outlined under the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Records must be kept, and a copy of the QAP must be provided to NSW Health.

Private water supplies used for commercial activities (eg home based food business, bed and breakfast establishments) must be potable water and must develop and submit a QAP to NSW Health.



The provision of safe and suitable clean water for human consumption is essential to life and good health.

» ***View the legislation***

www.legislation.nsw.gov.au
to view the Food Act 2003 and regulations, Public Health Act and regulations and the Work Health and Safety Act

www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/eh34
to view the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines

www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/water/Pages/private-supplies.aspx
to view the Quality Assurance Program guidelines and template documents



Food Act 2003

Under the Food Standards Code embodied in the *Food Act*, food businesses that prepare, process, package foods for human consumption are required to use potable water in any food processing, food handler hygiene and cleaning of food premises and equipment. Non-potable water can only be used in areas where it is unlikely to affect food safety.

Work Health and Safety Act

The *Work Health and Safety Act* (WHS Act) allows for the approval of Codes of Practice (COP) to be a practical guide to achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare under the WHS Act.

The COP Managing the Work Environment and Facilities applies to all work and work places covered by the WHS Act. It entails that workers must be provided with an adequate clean supply of water at suitable temperature, at all times, supplied in a hygienic manner. Water that may not be fit for human consumption (eg being used for industrial processes or for fire protection) must have warning signs that the water is unfit for drinking.

Camping Grounds, Caravan Parks

The *Local Government (Manufactured Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005 Clause 101(6) and Clause 27 (4)* require that water supplied for human consumption or domestic purposes at these premises comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

»» Can recycled water be used as drinking water?

Recycled water is an emerging resource to help preserve our potable water supplies for drinking, cooking and bathing.

Whilst recycled water is generally treated to a standard high enough that it can be safely released to the environment, used for clothes washing, irrigation, toilets and outdoor washing, it is not considered to be of potable standard and therefore cannot be supplied for drinking, cooking and bathing, for use in swimming pools or in rain water tanks.



»» If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

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