

## Who Monitors the Water Supply System?

For more than 75 years the Advisory Committee for the Purity of Water has been monitoring the quality of Western Australian drinking water and recommending improvements in monitoring and management protocols to the Ministers for Health and Water Resources.

The Committee is composed of experts from the private and public sectors, government regulatory and advisory agencies and is chaired by the Executive Director Public Health. The HDWA and licensed water suppliers report to this Committee.

## How Should a Problem about Drinking Water be Reported?

Problems concerning the quality of drinking water should be reported to the supplier or the local government Environmental Health Officer. Results from the most recent monitoring should be available from these agencies and appropriate action can be taken if necessary.



<sup>1</sup>Bull RJ, Birnbaum LS, Cantor KP, Rose JB, Butterworth BE, Pegram R, Tuomisto J. "Symposium Overview. Water Chlorination Essential Process or Cancer Hazard?" *Fundamental and Applied Toxicology* 1995;28: 155-166

<sup>2</sup>Environmental Canada. *A Primer on Water: Questions and Answers*. Ottawa. 1990.

## Other leaflets available

Is the Water in your Rainwater Tank Safe to Drink  
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Nitrate in Drinking Water  
Cryptosporidiosis  
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Emergency Treatment of Drinking Water Supplies

## Further information

For further information contact your  
Local Government Environmental Health Officer

or the

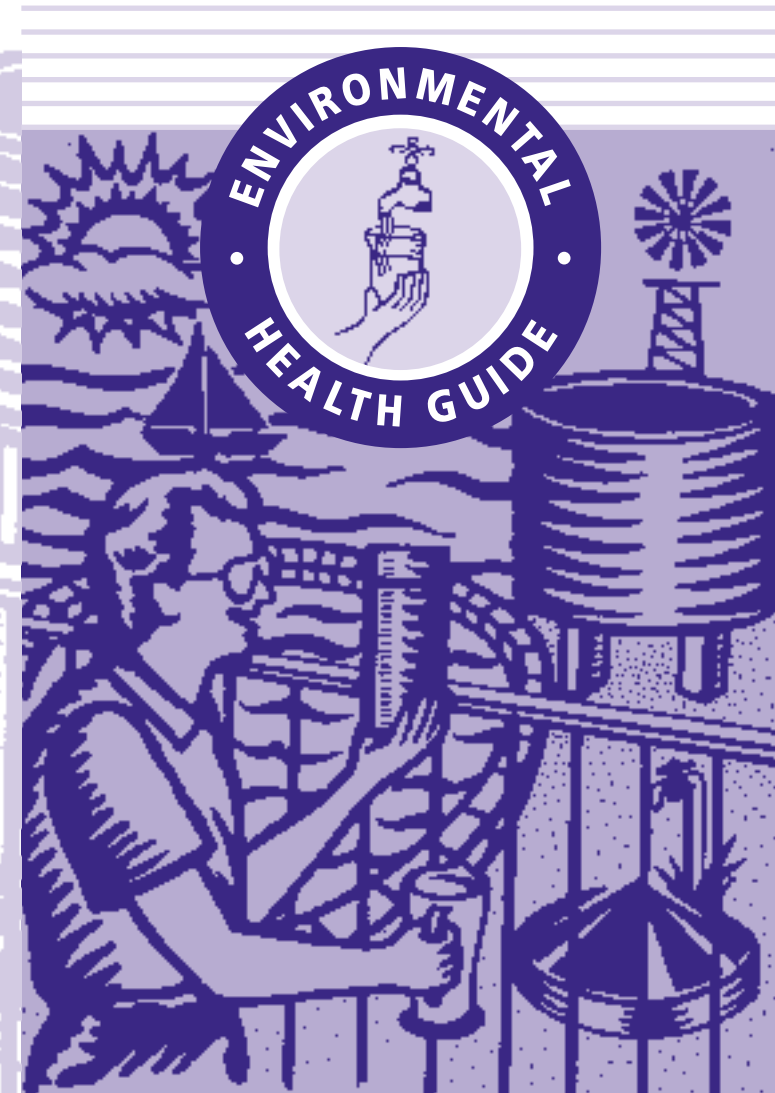
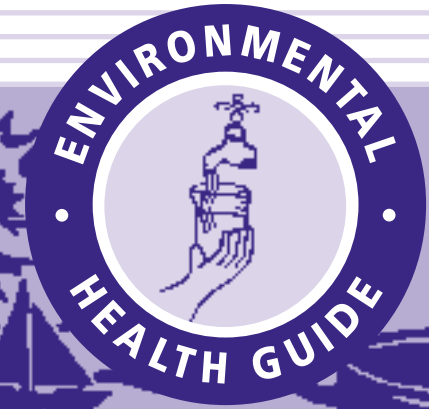
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# Monitoring Drinking Water in Western Australia





*All living things from the tiniest insect to the tallest tree need water to survive. To maintain good health we need to consume about 2.5 litres of water each day from either food or drink.*

### *What Is Drinking Water?*

Drinking water (potable water) is water intended primarily for human consumption and has other domestic uses such as bathing and showering. It may be consumed directly as it comes from the tap or indirectly in beverages or food prepared with water.

Drinking water should be safe to use and aesthetically pleasing. Ideally, it should be clear, colourless and well aerated, with no unpalatable taste or odour and it should contain no suspended matter, harmful chemicals, substances or harmful bacteria.

### *How is Drinking Water Supplied?*

In WA there are three main suppliers of drinking water—these are:

- licensed public drinking water suppliers such as the Water Corporation, AqWest and Busselton Water Board. These are commonly known as suppliers of scheme water;
- privately operated small water systems supplying the public e.g. roadhouses, caravan parks and water carriers;
- private domestic water supplies.



All source their water from surface catchments (dams, rivers and soaks), groundwater (bores and springs) or rainwater.

About 90% of Western Australians receive drinking water from licensed and regulated public drinking water supply systems—scheme supplies. As a result, Western Australia has one of the lowest instances of serious water-borne diseases in the world.

*Did you know that in the world as a whole, diarrhoea due to infectious (water-borne) microbes is responsible for more deaths each year than aids and cancer combined.<sup>1</sup> Globally, about 34,000 deaths occur daily from water-related diseases.<sup>2</sup> The majority of these occur where there is little or no control or monitoring of drinking water quality.*

### *Who Regulates the Quality of Drinking Water in WA?*

The Health Department of Western Australia (HDWA) regulates drinking water in this State. The Department reviews, interprets and applies the recommendations contained in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines which are published by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The HDWA may also apply specific requirements that vary from these Guidelines.

The HDWA requires large water suppliers, (including large and small scheme suppliers), mine sites and bottled water manufacturers in the State, to monitor their systems and report the results to the Department.



Similar monitoring is required by other non-scheme suppliers of drinking water e.g. roadhouses, tea-rooms, caravan parks, farm stays, holiday chalets and water tankers. These are monitored by HDWA with the assistance of a network of local government health authorities.

### *How is Drinking Water Quality Assessed?*

The safety of drinking water is assessed for its micro-biological content, its physical appearance and its chemical and radiological contamination. Of these, micro-biological contaminants are considered the most important as they may carry disease.

Values stated in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines are used as the basis for determining drinking water quality in Western Australia.

Micro-organism, chemical and radiological values are based on the latest World Health Organisation recommendations. They are not mandatory standards for use in identifying acceptable water quality. However, they provide a framework to enable water suppliers and the HDWA to deliver high quality water.

The latest version of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines can be found on the Internet at [www.nhmrc.health.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.health.gov.au) or may be purchased from the Government Info Shop, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street, Perth 6000, Tele Info 132447.

