

# Drinking Water Regulatory Unit

Volume 3, December 2004

## **New appointments**

The unit has now appointed three project officers who will commence work during the months of December and January. We look forward to welcoming Vanora Mulvenna, Janine Ryan and Belinda Bush to the unit. They bring an enormous collective and varied experience with them, and will greatly enhance the work that the Drinking Water Regulatory unit is doing.

## **Safe Drinking Water Regulations – Regulatory Impact Statement**

The department appreciated receiving 26 submissions in relation to the Regulatory Impact Statement. The submissions are now on our website for your information.

The submissions have been assessed and appropriate consultations have been undertaken with Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Treasury and Finance. A further draft is being discussed with the department's legal officers and parliamentary counsel. It is anticipated that the regulations will commence in early 2005.

Copies of the Regulatory Impact Statement, the draft regulations and other related information are still available on the Victorian Government's Health website:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking).

For information or queries please call Brian Labza of the Department of Human Services on (03) 9637 4088 or by email to [brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au)

## **Water quality monitoring results**

The Unit has contracted a business analyst to examine our data management needs. Our aim is to ensure that the water quality monitoring results we receive each month are used effectively in terms of monitoring compliance with the Legislation and to report on the water quality across the state.

Water businesses have been asked to respond to a short questionnaire that will assist in preparing the specifications for our data management system. The intent is to ensure that the least burden is imposed on the water businesses in relation to the submission of water quality monitoring data.

For those businesses that have been unable to provide water quality monitoring results to date, could you please call Julie Hoy on 9637 4090 to discuss a starting schedule.

## **Drinking water and risk management**

On Friday November 19, Dr Steve Hrudehy, University of Alberta Canada, presented an excellent seminar to members of the water industry. The seminar outlined the key

components of risk management, and followed with examples of the impact of NOT undertaking sound risk assessment and management.

Some key points from the seminar in relation to risk management were:

- Understand your risk – probability, hazard, uncertainty, consequences
- Risk comes in many guises – financial, reputation, commercial, environmental and most importantly from our point of view – public health.
- You need to steer a sensible course of action between the two types of failure– false positive and false negative
- In the absence of full and timely evidence of impending danger it is necessary to judge incomplete and/or inadequate evidence.
- The risk management challenge is one of making sensible and appropriate decisions in the face of inevitable uncertainties.
- In public health we normally would prefer false positive rather than false negative errors – but both types of failure have negative consequences.
- Risk management is a balancing act between taking action when none was required and failing to act when action is required.

A short version of Dr Hrudehy's presentation has been sent in the e-mail accompanying this newsletter, and a full version (minus cartoons) will be available on our new look website when it has been set up.

We hope you will take a few minutes to fill in the brief **evaluation form** that is included in the e-mail accompanying this newsletter. We would like to ascertain your views on the value of the seminar, the format and venue and to seek possible future topics.

Your completed sheet can be e-mailed to Kelly McCoy on [kelly.mccoy@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:kelly.mccoy@dhs.vic.gov.au) or faxed to 9637 5123.

## **Risk management plans**

With Dr Hrudehy's seminar uppermost in our minds it is timely to remind water businesses, and other entities affected by the legislation, that your risk management plans are due for completion by 1 July 2005.

The recent VicWater survey identified a few areas where support might assist water businesses whose plans are currently under development or yet to be started. To meet this need, VicWater are working on a new section on their website.

The regulations will provide essential guidance on the content of risk management plans. The Drinking Water Regulatory Unit will shortly supplement this with further information. Recognising that there is already a significant level of risk management planning in the water industry, it is not the intention of the unit to provide a template for risk management plans.

The unit does recognise that there are some businesses that are less advanced with risk assessment and Risk Management Plan development. Please contact the unit if you would like to make an appointment to discuss any matters related to the preparation of an adequate risk management plan.

## **Approval of analysts**

Once the regulations are in place, water businesses will be obliged to have their drinking water samples analysed by an approved analyst. The unit is currently working to ascertain the number of laboratories that have competence in doing analysis on the parameters listed in the draft regulations.

Once this is ascertained, a process for the approval of analysts will be finalised and communicated to the laboratories that are able to test potable waters and to the water businesses.

The draft regulations stipulate that water quality monitoring must be undertaken by analysts approved by the Secretary of the Department of Human Services. The regulations require an approved analyst to be in the employ of a body or person that operates a NATA accredited laboratory, and the Secretary must also make a judgement on the qualifications the analyst has that enables them to deliver accurate results in relation to the standards.

The department has been working with NATA to develop the approval process.

It will be the responsibility of the water business to ensure that the laboratory they contract to deliver their water quality monitoring has both NATA accreditation and analysts who have been approved by Department of Human Services to undertake and/or report on water quality monitoring results for the standards.

## Levy

The unit has recently proposed a framework for consideration by the water suppliers and water storage managers. The framework includes a flat administrative charge for Parks Victoria and the alpine resort management boards and a population based apportionment for the 18 water businesses.

The Victorian Water Industry Association has undertaken to work with their members collectively on this issue. The alpine resorts and Parks Victoria have been asked to respond individually.

- The request has asked for comment on the following matters:
- Is the administrative charge appropriate?
- Is there support for apportionment to be population based?
- Should the population basis allow for significant seasonal variations in population supplied? If yes is there a proposed mechanism for calculation?
- Is the proposed ratio for apportionment of the levy between Melbourne Water and the relevant water suppliers acceptable? If not is a different ratio suggested?
- Is annual invoicing an acceptable payment frequency?

Comment was due back with the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit by 10 December. Please address questions in relation to the levy to David Sheehan on 9637 4647 or [david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au).

## Website

We are working with our web development unit to create a new web site for the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit.

## Contacts

Formal correspondence on the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit should be addressed to:

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Manager, Food Safety and Water Regulation  
Public Health Group, Department of Human Services  
GPO Box 1670N  
Melbourne VICTORIA 3001

Call David Sheehan or Julie Hoy for queries relating to the Drinking Water Regulatory Office on:

9637 4647 or  
[david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au)

9637 4090 or  
[julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au)

Call Brian Labza for queries relating to the Regulatory Impact Statement on 9637 4088 or  
[brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au)

Call John Siapantas for queries relating to incident reporting on 9637 4221 or  
[john.siapantas@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:john.siapantas@dhs.vic.gov.au)

To report an incident please call the Department of Human Services on 132 222 and quote the pager number 87457.