

# Drinking Water Regulatory Unit

Volume 4, April 2005

The Drinking Water Regulatory Unit now has a complement of seven staff, and we hope that you will meet them all in the coming months. We have listed some of the projects each person has been responsible for.

Name	Position	Projects/Responsibilities
David Sheehan	Manager	THM methodology Analyst approval
Kelly McCoy	Administrative Officer	Management of correspondence Management of Unit files
Julie Hoy	Senior Project Officer	Communications Risk management planning Website
Brian Labza	Senior Project Officer	Regulations Localities and sampling points
Belinda Bush	Project Officer	Auditor approval Sampling methodology Guidance notes regulated water, undertakings and exemptions
Vanora Mulvenna	Project Officer	Methodologies Guidance notes regulated water, undertakings and exemptions
Janine Ryan	Project Officer	Localities and sampling points Analyst approval

The Drinking Water Regulatory Unit has allocated a principal contact officer to each water business to provide a single point of contact within the Unit, and to enable contact officers within the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit to develop in-depth knowledge of a small number of businesses. They will maintain regular contact, and meet or visit you if you require any assistance.

We are currently undertaking a round of visits to each authority, to meet key staff, and to better understand your business and systems and to enable us to perform our work more effectively. Visitors will include David Sheehan, the principal contact officer and in some circumstances, another officer.

Although water businesses will deal mainly with their principal contact officer, there will be instances where staff managing specific projects will need to be in touch with you. They will be able to draw on the knowledge of the principal contact officer to ensure that they understand your business and specific issues.

Recent visits to water businesses have been enormously successful, and have also provided us with an opportunity to see many beautiful parts of Victoria – to say nothing of experiencing some extreme weather conditions. We appreciate your time and the valuable information these meetings provide. We hope to have visited all water businesses by the end of April.

Water businesses wishing to find out the name and contact details of their principal contact officer should contact David Sheehan on 9637 4647.

## **Website**

The Drinking Water Regulatory Unit's website is now live, and can be found at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking.htm>.

It is very much a work in progress, due the developmental phase that the Unit is currently in. Major additions to the site will be communicated to relevant parties, but we suggest that you visit regularly to ensure that you are keeping up with the developments in the Unit.

We will be undertaking some evaluation of the website in the coming months. Should you experience any difficulties with the site please contact Julie Hoy on 9637 4090.

## **Guidance notes**

The website section 'Guidelines and Protocols' includes three new guidance notes that pertain to regulated water, exemptions and undertakings. These three processes are linked to the Safe Drinking Water Act rather than the Regulations, and can be put into effect immediately. Application forms for exemptions and undertakings are also available from the website.

## **Safe drinking water regulations**

The draft regulations have been moving through the administrative and legislative processes required to finalise them.

For information or queries please call Brian Labza 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**

As the regulations implementation phase is approaching, it is increasingly important for businesses to ensure they are implementing a water quality monitoring program that will allow them to meet their legislative obligations under the regulations. Please refer to the exposure draft of the regulations for the parameters and relevant sampling frequencies.

The principal contact officers are currently reviewing the first six months of water quality monitoring data, and will be in touch if there are any issues that require attention.

For 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.

## **Risk management planning**

As the 1 July 2005 completion date for risk management plans draws nearer, water businesses are encouraged to contact their principal contact officer if there are any questions in relation to the risk management planning process.

The regulations include some guidance in relation to the content of a risk management plan. Beyond these details there is no intention for the Unit to prescribe a template or format for risk management plans.

Should assistance be required to develop a format, it would be valuable to look at the following templates and frameworks such as:

Resource	Source/Published By
AS/NZS 4369:2004 Risk Management	Standards Australia
Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality	CRC for Water Quality and Treatment / National Health & Medical Research Council
Hazard Analysis and Critical Control	The Food Processors Institute
Electronic Decision Support Tool	National Health & Medical Research Council

A review of these documents, and some developed risk management plans, shows risk management plans contain a selection of the following components:

- Site, names and contact details
- Communication protocols
- Details of system
- Stakeholder list
- Assessment or classification of each of the critical risks
- Summary of overall hazard analysis
- Activities, preventive measures and corrective actions to manage hazards and risks, effectiveness verification
- System features to assist management of risks, effectiveness verification
- Consultation with water storage managers and other water suppliers
- Procedures and management systems (operational plans, incident and emergency response procedures)
- Record keeping and result reporting procedures
- Training programs

These components are NOT obligatory, but may assist you in deciding what your plan should include. Much of the information will currently exist, and businesses should identify existing information, rather than develop new documents.

Two Unit members have attended training in relation to the *AS/NZS 4360: Risk management* documents, and two further staff will also shortly undertake the same training. Should there be any questions in relation to risk management, and particularly the standards and the use of the framework, our staff will be able to assist you.

The handout from the presentation made by Dr Steve Hrudehy in November 2004 is available on the website for those of you that missed the seminar, or would just like to use some of the information.

Dr Hrudehy, an expert in the area of environmental health, risk management, public health and drinking water quality presented an excellent overview of:

- risk, and risk management systems for water businesses
- issues for Victoria, especially in relation to the new Safe Drinking Water Legislation
- the consequences of not managing risk – with examples drawn from *Safe Drinking Water: Lessons from Recent Outbreaks in Affluent Nations*

## Publications

A new publication *Guidelines for the use of non-potable water in food businesses* is now on the Food Safety website.

These guidelines provide information to assist food businesses to ensure that their water supply is safe for food preparation and human consumption. This document will assist water businesses where:

- they act as a food business
- they have contractual arrangements with a food business
- a food business inquires about its water supply.

Under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*, non-potable supplies for the purposes of food businesses will include:

- those that have been declared as regulated water
- that are subject to exemptions and undertakings and
- any other supply that does not meet the water quality standards.

The guidelines can be downloaded as a PDF file from the Food Safety website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/issues.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/issues.htm)

## Drinking water and public health

*“Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organised efforts of society”.*

Public health is concerned with improving the health of the population, rather than treating the diseases of individual patients. Public health professionals work through organised community and societal efforts to monitor the health status of the community; identify health needs; develop programmes to reduce risk; screen for early disease; control communicable disease; foster policies which promote health; plan and evaluate the provision of health care; and manage and implement change.

Contaminated drinking water is an issue of public health significance and the provision of safe drinking water is a traditional public health activity. Drinking water has the potential to deliver hazards such as micro-organisms and chemicals to a large number of people in a short period of time. As a water supplier or water storage manager you play a pivotal role in the provision of safe drinking water, and are an important agent of public health.

The interactions between drinking water and public health have been illustrated by numerous outbreaks. From the early public health interventions, such as the removal of the handle of the Broad Street pump in 1854, by Dr John Snow, to prevent the spread of cholera in London, through to the recent Walkerton outbreak of pathogenic *E. coli* and *Campylobacter* in 2000, the principles of risk management in relation to the prevention and reduction of disease from drinking water continue to apply. Outbreaks of waterborne illness continue to highlight the need to actively identify hazards, assess the associated risk and manage the significant risks to the provision of quality drinking water.

Risk management procedures, properly implemented through a risk management plan can provide water businesses, the public and government with assurance that the provision of drinking water is being taken seriously and is well managed.

## Contacting the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit

Contact or Correspondence Type	Name/Position	Address/Telephone	E-mail
Formal correspondence	Jennifer McDonald Manager Food Safety and Water Regulation	Public Health Group GPO Box 1670N, Melbourne Victoria 3001	
General queries	Unit e-mail		<a href="mailto:dwru@dhs.vic.gov.au">dwru@dhs.vic.gov.au</a>
Queries relating to the Unit	David Sheehan Julie Hoy	9637 4647 9637 4090	<a href="mailto:david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au">david.sheehan@dhs.vic.gov.au</a> <a href="mailto:julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au">julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au</a>
Queries relating to the Regulations	Brian Labza	9637 4088	<a href="mailto:brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au">brian.labza@dhs.vic.gov.au</a>
Incident reports – Section 22 Safe Drinking Water Act 2003	John Siapantas	9637 4221	<a href="mailto:john.siapantas@dhs.vic.gov.au">john.siapantas@dhs.vic.gov.au</a>
Incident reports – out of office hours	Environmental Health Senior Officer	132 222	Pager 87457