

Water Quality Guidelines

Drinking Water, Recycled Water and Waste water in Australia are all the subject of various Water Quality Guidelines. WaterRA actively engages with the Australian Water Industry to facilitate timely feedback to decision makers.

National Water Quality Management Strategy

Some of the Guideline documents listed on this page are components of the National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS). The aim of the NWQMS is to achieve sustainable use of the nation's water resources by protecting and enhancing their quality while maintaining economic and social development. The NWQMS has three major elements: policies, process and guidelines. Additional information on the NWQMS and other guideline documents can be found on the website of the [Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities](#).

Australian Drinking Water Guidelines

The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) are the primary reference on drinking water quality in Australia. They are designed to provide an authoritative reference on what defines safe, good quality water, how it can be achieved and how it can be assured. They are concerned both with safety from a health point of view and with aesthetic quality. The ADWG are not mandatory standards, however, they provide a basis for determining the quality of water to be supplied to consumers in all parts of Australia.

The ADWG are developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council in collaboration with the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. The last major revision of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines occurred December 2004 with the incorporation of the Framework for Management of Drinking Water Quality - a preventive risk management approach for water supplies. An updated version of the ADWG was released in 2011. WaterRA lodged a submission to the NHMRC on the proposed revisions to the Guidelines, which were last updated in 2006. The ADWG can be downloaded free from the [NHMRC](#) website.

NHMRC also publishes a companion document entitled Water Made Clear which provides information on drinking water quality and safety for consumers. This is also available free from the [NHMRC](#) website.

To aid in the implementation of the guidelines, the NHMRC has developed a computer software program to assist local drinking water managers to develop management plans tailored specifically to their community. The Community Water Planner was released in March 2006. This tool is specifically aimed at small community water supplies and is also available from the [NHMRC](#) website.

Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling

National guidelines for water recycling have been developed by the Environment Protection and Heritage Council and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. The guidelines have been developed in several components:

Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 1)

The Phase 1 guidelines deal with recycling of stormwater, greywater and treated sewage for non-potable uses. They cover centralised large-scale treated sewage and grey-water recycling schemes, and on-site systems (eg apartment blocks)

Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 2): Augmentation of Drinking Water Supplies

This module of the Phase 2 guidelines covers the planned use of recycled water (treated sewage and stormwater) to augment drinking water supplies. The document focuses on the source of water, initial treatment processes and blending of recycled water with drinking water sources. Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 2): Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse This document provides guidance on managing potential public health and environmental risks associated with non-potable reuse of roofwater collected from nonresidential buildings, and urban stormwater from sewerage areas, including stormwater collected from drains, waterways and wetlands.

Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 2): Managed Aquifer Recharge

These guidelines focus on the protection of aquifers and the quality of recovered water in managed aquifer recharge projects. Where managed aquifer recharge is part of water recycling projects, these guidelines should be used in conjunction with the Phase 1 guidelines. All of these documents are available from the [Environment Protection and Heritage Council](#) website. A number of supporting documents are also available.

Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water

The NHMRC has developed guidelines to protect human health from threats posed by the recreational use of coastal, estuarine and fresh waters, including both natural and artificial hazards. These guidelines cover physical and environmental factors and harmful aquatic organisms as well as water quality parameters. They are available from the [NHMRC website](#).

Rainwater Quality

There are no formal guidelines for rainwater quality in Australia however a detailed guidance booklet "[Guidance on the use of](#)

[rainwater tanks](#)" has been produced by the National Environmental Health Forum. Individual states and territories may impose treatment or management requirements where rainwater is supplied to members of the public for drinking or used in settings such as hospitals and schools.

Bottled Water Standards

The quality of bottled and packaged water is not covered by the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, but is regulated under the Food Code by [Food Standards Australia New Zealand](#) (refer to Standard 2.6.2 Non-Alcoholic Beverages and Brewed Soft Drinks of the Food Code).

Field Guide to the Community Water Planner

The Community Water Planner Field Guide is a package to assist water managers, service providers and Indigenous organisations working with remote communities to plan and implement water management programs for settlements with small water supplies. The [National Water Commission](#) created the project to develop opportunities for collaborative work surrounding provision of potable water supply to remote Indigenous communities. Water Research Australia (formerly WQRA) and research member, the [Centre for Appropriate Technology](#) (CAT) led the project. The field guide was tested during field trials and reviewed by Australian water industry experts. Other WaterRA members involved in the development of the product were:

- [NSW Department of Health](#)
- [Powerwater Corporation \(NT\)](#)
- [Water Corporation \(WA\)](#)

The package is generic and can be adapted to suit almost any type of water supply. The principles within the field guide are consistent with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and apply the risk management approach to water supplies outlined in the Framework for the Management of Drinking Water Quality.

Made up of a series of full-colour posters with a supporting manual, hard copies of the package are available from CAT in Alice Springs and state/territory health departments. For further information about the package... [See More](#)