

Non-potable water supplies

This guideline outlines steps that should be taken by service providers to ensure public health is protected when providing a non-potable water supply.

Water Supply Regulation (the delegated regulator) does not regulate the quality of water provided for non-potable purposes and this fact sheet has been provided as guidance material only.

Supply of non-potable water

There are instances when it is not feasible to supply water that is suitable for drinking purposes.

Inability to supply water that is suitable for drinking purposes may be due to factors such as poor quality source water, the costs of treatment, or the variable availability of source water.

Drinking purposes in this fact sheet means direct consumption and for use in the preparation of food (e.g., washing, cooking and personal hygiene ablutions).

Where a water supply is not suitable for drinking purposes, the service provider should advise customers and users of public facilities to ensure public health is protected at all times.

Communication activities can take the form of flyers, public signage and community announcements.



Examples of images for signage about non-potable water can be found at the Western Australia Department of Health ww2.health.wa.gov.au

Customer service standards

The *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* requires relevant service providers, i.e., most drinking water service providers, other than SEQ distributor-retailers to prepare Customer Service Standards (CSS) which should include information about the water supply:

- the suitability of the water supply for direct consumption
- if not suitable for direct consumption
 - the uses that the water supply is suitable for, and
 - the measures the service provider is taking to protect public health

Relevant service providers are required to publish their CSS on the internet. Customers can also view or purchase a copy of these service provider's CSS from the provider's place of business, upon request, during business hours.

Other Customer Communication

If the non-potable water supplier is not a relevant service provider, who is required to have and publish their CSS, a communication strategy should be developed by the service provider to ensure that clear and visible communication is in place so that the residents and visitors are aware that the water supply is not to be consumed. Relevant service providers are also encouraged to use a similar communication strategy in addition to their CSS.

The strategy should ensure that all users of the water supply at any point in the reticulation system are aware of the limited uses for which the water supply is suitable.

This strategy should ensure that customers are aware that the supply:

- is a non-potable water supply
- should not be used for drinking or food preparation or personal hygiene (where applicable)
- is acceptable for use in certain circumstances (a detailed list of these should be provided by the service provider)

Regular communication regarding the water supply and its approved uses should be undertaken to ensure new users and temporary visitors are aware that the water is not suitable for direct consumption.

Forms of communication that could be used to advise that the water is a non-potable water supply include:

- customer service standards on the relevant service providers' website
- statement in rates notices (next to any related charges) that this is not a drinking water supply
- fact sheets or flyers in rate notices
- advertisements in local media
- notices on community billboards/council offices
- distribution of notices by letter box drop
- signage adjacent to publicly accessible taps.

Monitoring uses of the non-potable water supply

Periodic inspections of public facilities should be undertaken by the service provider to ensure that the water supply is not being used inappropriately and that adequate signage is in place. It is the responsibility of the relevant local government to ensure that the water supply is not being used in food preparation.



Source: Western Australia Department of Health
ww2.health.wa.gov.au

Food preparation

Service providers need to be aware of their responsibilities and ensure the relevant users and businesses are properly advised of the suitability of the water supply for food preparation.

Standard 3.2.3 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code under the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (Cwlth) only allows the use of non-potable water in a food business where the use is unlikely to contaminate food or food surfaces.

In addition, section 39 of the *Food Act 2006*, requires local governments to ensure that food preparation businesses meet the food standards code (as defined in the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (Cwlth)).

Measures to manage risk

Alternate supply for drinking

Where non-potable water is supplied, the service provider should advise recipients of the alternatives available to them to access safe drinking water.

Further information

Water Supply Regulation
Department of Regional Development,
Manufacturing and Water

Level 3, 1 William Street, Brisbane Qld 4002
GPO Box 2246, Brisbane QLD 4001

For more information about service provider issues, email
drinkingwater.reporting@rdmw.qld.gov.au

General information regarding Queensland's water industry regulator can be found by visiting www.business.qld.gov.au and searching for "Water industry regulation".

Queensland Acts and related regulations can be obtained from the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel website
www.legislation.qld.gov.au

Commonwealth Acts can be obtained from the Federal Register of Legislation at
www.legislation.gov.au