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## **APPROVAL OF WATER RECYCLING PROJECTS AND PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES**

The purpose of this Circular is to provide local councils with information about the standards and approvals applying to water recycling projects and private water supplies. NSW Health developed this information in consultation with Sydney Water and the Departments of: Local Government; Water and Energy, Environment & Climate Change; and Planning.

### **1. Approvals for installation and operation of private recycled water systems**

With the current emphasis on water conservation and funding for water conservation projects, councils' development and planning sections may be receiving an increasing number of applications from private organisations for approvals for the installation of recycled water schemes as part of new development, or as alterations to existing development.

The installation and operation of a system of sewage management (which includes recycled water systems) without the approval of the local council or the approval of systems that have not been appropriately validated and verified, may be detrimental to public health and the environment.

While the recycling of wastewater (including greywater) should be encouraged, schemes need to be designed, installed and managed in order to control any risk to public health or the environment. The ability and willingness of the proponents, both technically and financially, to design, test and manage a recycled water scheme should be considered when assessing an application.

Councils are strongly encouraged to consult with the Department of Water and Energy (formerly the Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability) and local Public Health Units when considering applications for private recycled water systems.

Councils are reminded that, under section 68, Part C, items 5 and 6 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, they are responsible for issuing approvals to both install and operate systems of sewage management as defined under section 68A of the Local Government Act. This includes councils in the Sydney Water and

Hunter Water areas of operation where councils are not the plumbing and drainage authority.

Details on approval requirements are outlined in Division 4 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. Many of the schemes currently being considered by councils are privately owned and operated and are designed to treat sewage from premises normally occupied by more than 10 persons, or with an average daily flow of sewage exceeding 2,000 litres. This makes the sewage management facility exempt from the requirement to be accredited by NSW Health. However, it is strongly recommended that council require the validation and verification of treatment systems of any size.

Councils have orders powers under section 124 of the Local Government Act in the event of an unapproved system of sewage management being installed and operated on premises.

Councils within Sydney Water's and Hunter Water's areas of operations are reminded of the obligations under section 78 of the *Sydney Water Act 1994* and section 51 of the *Hunter Water Act 1991* for the applicant to give notice of certain development applications.

Connections for fire fighting purposes or temporary connections provided while system performance is being validated also require notification to Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

Within Sydney Water and Hunter Water's areas of operation, it is strongly advised that even where applications do not involve connection to existing water and wastewater networks (or propose disconnection from those networks), the water utility is still notified to enable effective monitoring of such development; to ensure that the existing networks are safeguarded; and to minimise potential difficulties should it become necessary for the water utility to act as a supplier of last resort.

## **2. Private water supplies**

In large urban areas access to a reticulated potable water supply remains the most reliable source of drinking water for the community. In these areas NSW Health supports the use of rainwater tanks for all non-potable uses, such as garden watering and car washing. The use of rainwater tanks for drinking purposes is not recommended where a reticulated potable water supply is available.

Some developers are choosing to disconnect from the reticulated potable water supply, or supplement this supply by collecting water on-site and supplying this water to the public and/or employees who use their premises. There are a number of Acts and Regulations that require the provision of safe water in premises that serve the public. The operators or managers of premises that supply their own water to consumers are defined as water suppliers under the *Public Health Act 1991*. Water suppliers have a responsibility to supply safe drinking water to consumers.

Part 2B of the *Public Health Act 1991* contains a range of provisions concerning the safety of drinking water. In particular NSW Health may require a supplier of drinking water to issue warnings to the public about the safety of available drinking water, may issue a boil water advice, and may require a supplier to carry out testing and report the results to NSW Health.

Section 124 of the Local Government Act provides that orders can be issued requiring necessary action(s) to be taken so that food can be handled in clean and sanitary conditions, to bring a water supply into compliance with plumbing and drainage standards, and require the connection of premises to councils' water supply and/or sewerage system if available.

The *Food Act 2003* requires compliance with the Food Standards Code. The Code states that food premises must have an adequate supply of potable water for the preparation of food. The *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004* (NHMRC) are recommended for guidance on what constitutes acceptable water for premises where food is prepared.

Clause 27 (4) of the Local Government (Manufactured Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005 states that the water supplied for human consumption or domestic purposes must comply with the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004* (NHMRC).

Full details on requirements and recommendations are contained in the NSW Health *Private Water Supply Guidelines 2007* (available from NSW Health [waterqual@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:waterqual@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)). It is recommended that a copy be provided to the managers of premises with a private water supply along with the separate NSW Health Guidelines *GL2005-033 Rainwater Tanks where a reticulated potable water supply is available* (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/ehb/water/rainwater.html>)

Councils that receive applications for development that includes water recycling systems and/or private water supplies are encouraged to contact their local Public Health Unit and the Department of Water and Energy for technical assistance.



**Garry Payne AM**  
**Director General**