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**Welcome to the Environmental Health Bulletin**, the quarterly newsletter which provides information on developments in the field of environmental health. The Bulletin is edited by Hunter New England Population Health and is distributed via email to people working in the field of environmental health within the area covered by Hunter New England Health.

Your contributions, news and feedback are welcome to help ensure the Bulletin is relevant and interesting. Our contact details are on page six.

We would appreciate it if new staff or staff without email, have access to this newsletter. Email [cindy.gliddon@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cindy.gliddon@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au) to be added to the email list. This edition of the newsletter and past copies can be downloaded from: [http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/hnepn/environmental\\_health](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/hnepn/environmental_health)

## BEATING THE BITE OF MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASE A Guide to Personal Protection Strategies Against Australian Mosquitoes

The Department of Medical Entomology at University of Sydney and Westmead Hospital has released a guide to assist us in protecting ourselves against mosquitoes. There are over 300 species of mosquito in Australia but thankfully less than 20 represent a significant risk to human health, either as nuisance-biting pests or vectors of disease. During the warmer months, mosquitoes can take less than one week to complete their development from eggs to adults. The female mosquitoes bite humans or animals and utilise the blood protein for their egg development. They are attracted to carbon dioxide and the "smell" of our skin. Each mosquito species varies in its propensity to bite humans.

Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus are the two most widespread arboviruses in Australia. They cause non-fatal but potentially severely debilitating disease. Murray Valley encephalitis virus can be severely debilitating and fatal. There is potential for epidemics of this disease following flooding and extended periods of above average rainfall.

Other mosquito-borne viruses, including Kunjin virus, Sindbis virus, Stratford virus, Kokobera virus and Edge Hill virus, are often found in local mosquitoes but are generally not known to cause serious humans disease. Dengue only occurs in far north Queensland. Australia was declared free of malaria in 1981 (but introduced cases do occasionally occur).

The guide promotes personal protection measures to reduce the likelihood of being bitten and offers tips to householders to reduce mosquito numbers around the home including:

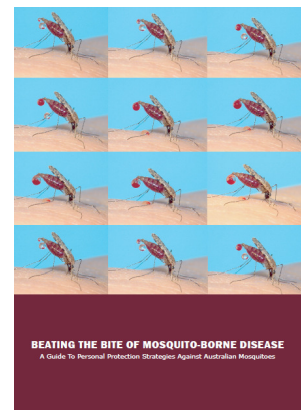
- Avoiding mosquitoes when and where they are most active.
- Use of registered insect repellents.
- Responsible use of insecticides around the home.
- Minimising opportunities for mosquito breeding.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<http://medent.usyd.edu.au/arbovirus/whatsnew.htm>

or to watch a short video on mosquitoes go to:

<http://health.nsw.gov.au/multimedia/index.asp?tab=5&id=13>



## Manning Indigenous Health and Environment Collaboration

The Manning Indigenous Health and Environment Collaboration (MIHEC) (previously known as the Purfleet Environment Health Committee) is an interagency group that has been established for over 10 years. It is a partnership between Purfleet-Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council (PTLALC), Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (Biripi), Greater Taree City Council (GTCC) and Hunter New England Local Health Network formally known as Hunter New England Area Health Service.

The Group aims to address the social determinants of health in a holistic manner to improve the long term emotional, social and environmental wellbeing of the Purfleet and Taree communities, with a focus on the Purfleet community.

The MIHEC, together with the Purfleet Community, has been involved in and supported a number of achievements over the years including:

- Clean up Australia Day at Purfleet. After a community clean up, participants enjoyed a BBQ and were awarded certificates. This is an ongoing project.
- Waste Management Community Education Day at Biripi. This was well supported.
- Clean Up Project to remove scrap metal.
- Re-establishment of the Biripi Newsletter - lead by Leonie Morcombe
- The Sharps/Needle Bin Collection was re-established (located in front of the Biripi clinic) and is continuing.
- Assistance with NAIDOC Celebrations and flag raising ceremony.
- Indigenous artist produced anti-litter signs which have been put up around the community.
- New bus shelter for school children located at Purfleet.
- Animal Health Care Day in conjunction with the RSPCA
- Mr Germ makes an appearance at Purfleet events to talk about hygiene
- Funding for fruit trees and a community garden at Purfleet.
- Funding for a fish/kangaroo cleaning station and upgrades to drainage at the dog kennel.
- Agencies committed and attended monthly meetings throughout the year.

Recently the MIHEC group had a planning day to come up with ideas for 2011. Some of these ideas include:

1. Kids Reward Program - Rewarding children who attend school and who are doing well at school by offering access to after school activities in the new community building.
2. Biripi are conducting a survey of children. This survey will be important in establishing the needs for children in the community and the activities they may be interested in.
3. Seeking funding to support sports and activities programs such as Little Athletics.
4. The new multipurpose/community centre to be used for programs such as- homework, fitness, dancing and movie nights.
5. Ongoing involvement in Sorry Day activities (May) and Naidoc Week (1<sup>st</sup> week July) and Australia Clean-up Day (March).
6. Grand Opening of the fish and kangaroo cleaning station.
7. Ensure the dog kennel drainage is finalised prior to the opening day.
8. BBQ/Picnic area established in the community with table/chairs
9. Continue with the Community Biripi Newsletter.
10. Housing for Health.



Manning Indigenous Health and Environment Collaboration

## Assessment of Site Contamination NEPM Variation 2010

Contaminated land has become an increasingly important environmental, health, economic and planning issue in Australia over the past few years. With changing community standards and the redevelopment of former industrial and agricultural land, there is increasing recognition of the problems associated with contaminated sites.

The National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999 (the NEPM) was developed to provide a nationally consistent approach to the assessment of site contamination. The NEPM was reviewed between 2004 and 2007 and comments from public consultation were considered in the proposed variation to the NEPM in 2010.

The National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) Committee has approved the release for public consultation, the proposed variation to the NEPM. The variation includes an updated policy framework, a revised assessment process and nine technical guidelines such as guidance on investigation levels for soil and groundwater, site characterisation, health risk assessment, ecological risk assessment, and soil quality guidelines.

### The major changes included in the draft varied Assessment of Site Contamination NEPM are:

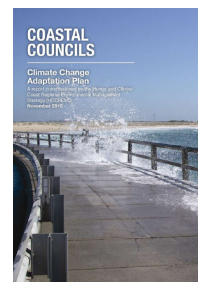
- New and improved methodologies for deriving Ecological Investigation Levels (Schedule B5A) and Health Investigation Levels (Schedule B4).
- Incorporation of Health Screening Levels and Ecological Screening Levels for petroleum hydrocarbons (Schedule B1).
- Incorporation of guidance for assessing asbestos impacts (Schedules B1 and B2).
- incorporation of guidance on stockpile sampling (Schedule B2), contaminant leachability (Schedule B3) and bioavailability (Schedule B4)
- Incorporation of guidance for assessment of volatile substances (Schedules B1, B2 and B4).

The proposed variation to the NEPM and associated documents can be downloaded from <http://www.ephc.gov.au/contam/pdocs>

*Please note that written submissions to these variations have ended – though, still an interesting read!*

## Climate Change Adaptation Reports

The Coastal Councils Climate Change Adaptation Report produced under the HCCREMS Regional Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Planning Project is now available.



The report identifies regionally common risks arising from climate change for coastal councils in the Hunter, Central and Lower North Coast region of NSW, and highlights regional opportunities for collaboration (across councils and agencies) for addressing these. Development of the report has encompassed considerable input from all participating coastal councils and a wide range of state government organisations.

The report can be downloaded from: [http://www.hccrems.com.au/HCCREMS-Resources/Library/ClimateChange/HCCREMS\\_Coastal\\_Councils\\_Adaptation\\_Report.aspx](http://www.hccrems.com.au/HCCREMS-Resources/Library/ClimateChange/HCCREMS_Coastal_Councils_Adaptation_Report.aspx)

Two other reports also developed under the regional climate change project are available for download from the HCCREMS website.

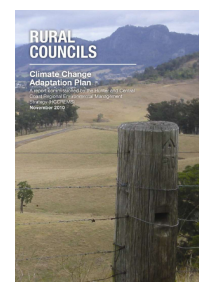
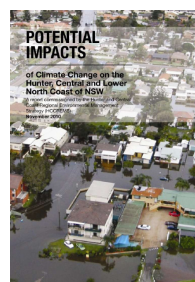
### Regional Impacts Analysis Report

This report provides a broad scale analysis of exposure and sensitivity of the Hunter, Central and Lower North Coast region to five major climate change impact areas including:

- Coastal inundation and recession associated with sea level rise and storm surges.
- Extreme rainfall, flooding and storms.
- Changes to fire weather conditions.
- Changes to average rainfall and water availability.
- Changes to average and extreme temperatures.

### Rural Councils Regional Adaptation Report

Similar to the Coastal Councils report, this document identifies the common risks and adaptation opportunities that exist for Rural HCCREMS member councils.



## Scores on Doors is knocking in NSW

NSW consumers are the first in Australia to benefit from a standardised, state wide system to rate the food safety and hygiene standards of foodservice businesses. The Scores on Doors system aims to provide consumers with point of sale information indicating how well foodservice businesses comply with food hygiene standards during inspections.

It is anticipated that this will improve food hygiene compliance in businesses and, as a result, reduce food borne illness.

The voluntary system is being trialled by a representative group of approximately 20 Councils, including Cessnock, Upper Hunter and Newcastle Councils which commenced in 1 July 2010 for a six month period. State-wide commencement of the system will be from July this year.

The Scores on Doors system features a simple, easy to recognise ranking system of an A, B or C, where A represents the highest level of compliance possible.

From 1 July 2011 people will be able to look for the Scores on Doors certificate displayed in their local café or food outlet. The challenge is to ensure that there is consistency in standards across all local councils, so that an A rating in Bronte is the same as an A rating in Bathurst.

The NSW Food Authorities' 'Name and Shame' list informs the community of food premises doing the wrong thing, and the Scores on Doors program aims to reward good performance.

NSW Local Government and Shires Association Presidents Cr Genia McCaffery and Cr Bruce Miller endorsed the Scores on Doors system which allocates a rank based on inspections carried out by Council food safety inspectors.

Scores on Doors is one of a package of initiatives being implemented in NSW in an effort to bring a comprehensive and balanced approach to improving food safety and reducing food borne illness in the retail food service sector.



For additional information, visit:  
<http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/other-food-topics/scores-on-doors/>

## Partnership opportunity with NSW Health in the Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer Training Program

Across Australia, there are increasing demands for health care workers including Environmental Health Officers. The enHealth National Environmental Health Strategy 2007-2012 identifies a shortage in EHOs and the need to address these shortages, particularly in local government where it is increasingly difficult to attract suitably qualified Environmental Health Professionals.

Since 1997, the NSW Health Aboriginal Environmental Health Training Program has provided university study and workplace support for Aboriginal people to become EHOs. To date, there are 11 graduates and five current trainees in the Program.

NSW Health would like to explore partnership options with the Local Government Sector to expand this successful Program, providing more training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. As a funding and training partner, NSW Health will provide 50 per cent of the total cost of the Training Program for the duration of the study requirement (approximately six years) and joint supervision of the Trainee with the local Public Health Unit to fulfil the training competencies.

Benefits of Aboriginal people working in areas of Environmental Health include:

- Contribute to increasing the supply of highly trained and educated EHOs and improve education and training outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- Increase opportunities for Aboriginal people to consult and participate in identifying issues and develop solutions to improve environmental health outcomes.
- Broaden workplace cultural respect and awareness.
- Provide additional opportunities for collaboration and partnering between Public Health Units, Councils and Aboriginal communities.

Increased workforce participation by Aboriginal people is also likely to lead to a significant contribution to COAG's broader goals of social inclusion and closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and may lead to economic benefits in terms of expanding the overall labour force. If you are interested in discussing a partnership between your Council and NSW Health, please contact the Aboriginal Environmental Health Unit on [enhwu@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enhwu@doh.health.nsw.gov.au).

## Chemical Clean Up Advice for District Emergency Management Committees

The recent flooding of inland rivers and creeks can result in chemical containers (both marked and unmarked) being widely dispersed and found in amongst flood debris and elsewhere.

In instances where containers are found, the NSW Fire Brigade needs to be notified of any unsecured or leaking containers so that they can render the containers safe.

### Disaster Relief Funding – Advice for Local Government Representatives

Flood affected Councils seeking disaster relief funding **should budget** the cost of containment, transport and disposal of chemical containers in their funding applications.

In instances where Councils accept chemical containers, they need to be placed in a safe secure area to await subsequent transport for treatment and disposal. The secure area needs to have a compacted earth bund around the perimeter with sufficient capacity to contain any spills. Alternatively, an existing bunded hardstand area can be used if available. The area should be signposted and access restricted to staff managing and handling of the chemicals.

### Transport and Disposal of Chemicals

The transport and disposal of known and unknown chemicals can be very expensive. There are a limited number of companies in NSW who can undertake this work.

A list of hazardous materials service providers can be found on the DECCW website.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/hazmat/providers.htm>

If you require further advice, please contact the DECCW representative on your District Emergency Management Committee or DECCW's nearest regional office.



## Hydrotherapy 'Physio' Pool

A new hydrotherapy pool has recently become available in Australia. The 2500 litre hydrotherapy pool is for use by one person at a time. The water used in the pool is transferred from a 3000 litre fiberglass storage tank and delivered to the pool when required and returned after use. The water is continuously re-circulated and has filtration, heating, automatic chlorine dosing and pH control.

At the end of each use, the water is pumped back to the storage tank, to enable the door on the glass pool to be opened. The water continues to be treated in the storage tank. Once the next client enters the pool and closes the door, the water is pumped back into the pool.

The system appears to come within the definition of a Swimming Pool in terms of the Public Health (Swimming Pools and Spa Pools) Regulation 2000.

Details: <http://www.hydroco.com>



## Responding to flood threats to drinking water quality

The flooding and increased flows in rivers over the past month may be creating difficulties for water treatment systems. When we are experiencing wetter than usual conditions, it is important to remind water utilities in your area to be more vigilant than usual in the operation and monitoring of their systems. Additional operational monitoring of characteristics such as chlorine residual in the distribution system will provide the utilities with information that will help them to manage their systems in a timely fashion.

The NSW Health protocol for the management of microbiological quality of drinking water' advises that action needs to be taken when treatment looks like failing (inability to meet turbidity and disinfection targets) OR when source water quality changes rapidly. If a utility feels that treatment failure or change in source quality means it cannot guarantee the safety of its supply, that utility ought to contact the Local Health Network to discuss the need for a boil water alert.

It may be useful to remind water utilities of these points so that they are not only waiting for laboratory results to assess the safety of their supply.

For more information visit:

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/environment/water/nswhrp\\_microbiological.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/environment/water/nswhrp_microbiological.asp)

## Conferences & Training

Erosion and Sediment Control Workshops  
South Sydney, 24-25 February 2011  
Details: Zoe Slater, CET. Ph. 4954 4997 or email  
[mail@environmentaltraining.com.au](mailto:mail@environmentaltraining.com.au)

Public Health School,  
Sydney Olympic Park, 28 Feb – 1 Mar 2011  
Details: Margaret Hind [nsw@eh.org.au](mailto:nsw@eh.org.au)

Practical Erosion & Sediment Control for the  
Workforce  
Goulburn, 15 March 2011  
Tweed, 4 April 2011  
Details: Zoe Slater, CET. Ph. 4954 4997 or email  
[mail@environmentaltraining.com.au](mailto:mail@environmentaltraining.com.au)

TAFE NSW : Food Microbiology for Food Safety  
Auditors course  
Ultimo Sydney, 11 - 15 April 2011.  
Details: Tracey (02) 9217 5487 or register at  
[www.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.tafensw.edu.au)

Public Health Emergency Management (I) Training  
for Health Professionals  
Sydney, 3 - 5 May 2011  
Details: [Christopher.Williams@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Christopher.Williams@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

NSW Health Skin Penetration Workshop  
North Ryde Sydney, 9 -10 May, 2011  
Details: [anne.ford@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:anne.ford@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)

Environmental Health Australia (NSW inc)  
2011 Annual State Conference  
Tweed Heads, 23 - 24 May 2011  
Margaret Hind [nsw@eh.org.au](mailto:nsw@eh.org.au)  
Deadline for receipt of Abstracts - 1 April 2011

8<sup>th</sup> National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Environmental Health Conference  
Darwin, 27-30 September 2011  
Details: (03) 9018 9332 or [adam@natsieh.com.au](mailto:adam@natsieh.com.au)

## New exemption regime for the Water Industry Competition Act

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will be holding half day information sessions on the Water Industry Competition Act and the recent changes to the exemptions under this licensing regime.

**When:** Wednesday 23rd February 2011

**Time:** Registration 8.30am;  
Information Session 9.00am – 1.00pm

**Place:** Wesley Conference Centre, Smith Room,  
220 Pitt St, Sydney

In March 2011 further sessions will be held in Sydney and regional NSW, depending on the response to the first session. Locations of the sessions will be determined according to availability of facilities and numbers of respondents in an area.

For further information on the information sessions or the licensing regime, please contact Carly Price on (02) 9113 7732 or [carly\\_price@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:carly_price@ipart.nsw.gov.au) or Narelle Berry by phoning (02) 9113 7722 or email [narelle\\_berry@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:narelle_berry@ipart.nsw.gov.au).

## Hunter New England Environmental Health Staff

Dr. David Durrheim, Service Director - Health Protection

**Newcastle:** Philippe Porigneaux, EH Mgr / SEHO  
Chris Williams, EHO  
Nichole Ansell, EHO  
Cindy Gliddon, EHO (Mon, Tues, Wed)  
Carolyn Herlihy, EHO (Thurs, Fri)  
Kelly Main, EHO (Mon, Tues)

**Taree:** Hannah Ballard, Trainee EHO

**Tamworth:** Glenn Pearce, SEHO  
Fidelis Jaravani, EHO  
Ruth Williams, Trainee EHO

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Taree NSW 2430  
P: (02) 6515 1853  
F: (02) 6515 1804

**After hours:** P: (02) 4924 6499, request EHO on call P: (02) 6764 8000 P: (02) 4924 6499, request EHO on call

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