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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/hneph/environmental\\_health](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/hneph/environmental_health)

## Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy

A review of food labelling laws and policies established new recommendations that will impact on industry, regulators and consumers in Australia.

The review was commissioned by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council in October 2009. Following extensive consultation, the final report entitled *Labelling Logic: Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy* has now been released. This Report provides a comprehensive framework within which future food labelling law and policy can be determined. The report contains a wide range of specific recommendations to improve food labelling law and policy.

There are 61 recommendations that will have an impact on industry, regulators and consumers in NSW. The recommendations encompass a broad range of topics, including:

1. That food labelling policy be guided by a hierarchy based on risk in descending order of food safety, preventative health, new technologies and consumer values issues.
2. Allocation of sufficient resources to monitoring and enforcement of food labelling requirements.
3. The development of a Nutrition Policy.
4. Energy declaration on foods sold at chain food service outlets and on vending machines.
5. Health claims substantiation.
6. Health warning labels for alcohol products.
7. Genetically modified food labelling.
8. Consumer protection concerns accorded a high priority by relevant consumer protection agencies.

For further information and to download the report, please visit: [www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au](http://www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au)



## Private Water Supply Guidelines & Information Bulletin

NSW Health's *Private Water Supply Guidelines* assist private water supply operators in providing water that is safe to use. The Guidelines are for any business or facility that supplies drinking water from an independent water supply (i.e. not non-treated town water). NSW Health recommends regular testing of drinking water at facilities with a private supply. If a private water supply is contaminated, is not monitored or treated, then consumers should be warned.

The Private Water Supply Information Bulletin refers to the Private Water Supply Guidelines, and clarifies the responsibilities of private water suppliers and the powers of Local Government and NSW Health under existing legislation and the NHMRC Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004. The information bulletin contains additional information to assist Public Health Units and Councils in applying the guidelines.

### Role of Councils and Public Health Units

A register of premises and reports of inspections should be maintained by agreement between the local Public Health Unit and local Council. It is recommended that premises be inspected if considered at high risk. Local Councils can provide inspections on a fee-for-service basis under the Local Government Act 1993 (Section 608).

When considering development applications for premises serving the public and/or employees where a private water supply is used, local Councils should make provision of a safe water supply a development consent condition.

A suggested condition of consent is: *'If the proposed development cannot be connected to a potable reticulated water supply the applicant must demonstrate that the drinking water supplied to the premises will consistently meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004 (NHMRC) and any subsequent amendments to the guidelines.'*

Or

*'An appropriate water supply management plan (as determined by Council) be provided'.*

### Legislative Provisions

There are a number of Acts and Regulations that support the Guidelines by requiring the provision of safe water in premises that serve the public and/or employees. Part 2B of the *Public Health Act 1991* contains a range of provisions concerning the safety of drinking water. In particular the Chief Health Officer may require an operator of a drinking water supply to

issue warnings to consumers about the safety of the available drinking water, may issue a boil water advice, and may require operators to carry out testing and report the results to NSW Health.

The *Local Government Act 1993* Section 124, 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 requiring the connection of a premises to Councils' water supply and/or sewerage system if available.

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

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* are recommended for guidance on what constitutes acceptable water for premises where food is prepared.

Full details on requirements and recommendations are contained in the NSW Health *Private Water Supply Guidelines*. It is recommended that a copy be provided to the operators or managers of premises with a private water supply along with the separate NSW Health document on *Rainwater Tanks*. These can be obtained from the NSW Health website <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/ehb/water/drinkwater.html>

In addition, the *Public Health Act 2010* and Regulations are expected to commence in 2012. These will require all private suppliers to develop and implement a Quality Assurance Program, or a risk-based drinking water management plan. This provides the basis for enforcing the *Private Water Supply Guidelines*. It has also been proposed that these powers be extended to local government, when dealing with private suppliers.

Full copies of the Private Water Supply Guidelines and Information Bulletin can be downloaded from: [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/environment/water/private\\_supplies.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/environment/water/private_supplies.asp)

## Environmental Health Risk Assessment Guidelines

&

### Australian Exposure Factor Guidance

Australia's Environmental Health Committee (enHealth) has released draft copies of two documents and invites public comment. The documents are:

1) *Environmental Health Risk Assessment Guidelines for assessing health risks from environmental hazards* - This is an update of the 2004 publication of the same name which has played an important role in informing environmental health risk assessments in Australia, providing support for risk assessors, government regulators and policy makers, and as a tool for teaching and training programs.

and its companion document:

2) *Australian Exposure Factor Guidance* - This is a new document that is intended to provide risk assessors with sets of tabulated data on human factors that may be used as inputs to the exposure assessment component of an environmental health risk assessment.

These documents are available for download at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/enhealth-public-comments>

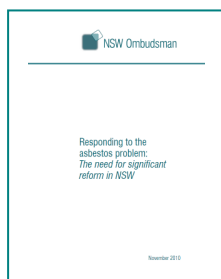
Please forward any comments by 23 May 2011 to: [enHealth.Secretariat@health.gov.au](mailto:enHealth.Secretariat@health.gov.au)

### Responding to the asbestos problem: The need for significant reform in NSW by NSW Ombudsman

For the past two years, investigations into specific asbestos-related issues have been conducted by the NSW Ombudsman. In the recently released report it is highlighted that:

- in NSW there is no single government agency responsible for coordinating the management and containment of asbestos;
- there is no state-wide government plan for dealing with asbestos;
- there are gaps in asbestos legislation; and
- funding to deal with these issues is inadequate.

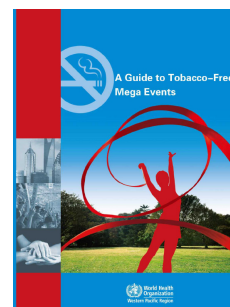
The full report can be downloaded from: <http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Asbestos.html>



## Smokefree Sydney Royal Easter Show

For this year's Sydney Royal Easter Show a smokefree policy was implemented, which restricted smoking to a number of outdoor designated smoking areas away from main thoroughfares. The change follows several years of advocacy by the Non-Smokers' Movement of Australia and ASH Australia, who have welcomed the move.

The Show is one of the biggest family events of the year in Australia. This year there were seven signposted areas for smokers to use. The designated areas were designed to encourage smokers to keep their smoking away from the crowds.



This is considered a big step in protecting children (and the general community) from tobacco smoke, in a crowded public outdoor area.

If there is a large community event being hosted in your area, consider downloading the World Health Organisations (WHO's) *Guide to Tobacco-Free Mega Events* from:

[http://www.wpro.who.int/internet/files/chn/tobacco\\_free\\_mega\\_event.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/internet/files/chn/tobacco_free_mega_event.pdf)

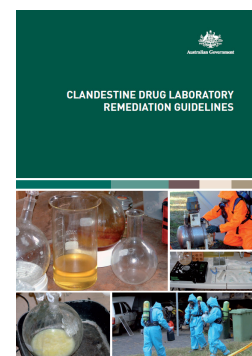
## Clandestine Drug Laboratory Remediation Guidelines

The Commonwealth *Clandestine Drug Laboratory Remediation Guidelines* are now available. The Guidelines provide a framework for regulatory authorities and environmental specialists to investigate and remediate sites that may have been contaminated due to being used as clandestine drug laboratories.

The Guidelines can be downloaded from the following website:

[http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Drugs\\_Drugs](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Drugs_Drugs)

Watch this space – we are told it is likely that the enHealth Committee will consider drafting a concise version of this document in the near future to provide guidance for Councils and Environmental Health Officers.



## Health and the Environment

A compilation of research evidence on how human health can be positively and negatively influenced by the environment has been released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The report synthesises research findings on 15 environmental factors that we know can influence people's health.

The environmental factors assessed were temperature, walkability, extreme weather events, ultraviolet radiation, indoor and outdoor air quality, water fluoridation, transport, food and water safety, green space, vector populations, environmental noise, housing condition, overcrowding and hazards in/around the home. The report summarises many studies across the 15 environmental factors.

*Health and the environment: a compilation of evidence* shows that the effects of the environment on humans can be either physical (such as respiratory problems due to air pollution) or mental (such as poor mental health during drought conditions).

The effects can also be direct, such as injury or death, or indirect, such as when environmental factors influence lifestyle or behavioural choices.

For example, it has been found that people living in walkable neighbourhoods are more likely to be physically active, and less likely to be obese, than those who live in less pedestrian-friendly areas. An example of the direct consequences is the death toll due to bushfires (815 deaths in Australia between 1851 and 2010).

The report also suggests that there is more to learn about the relationship between health and the environment. While new evidence is constantly emerging, the lack of data at a local level means that many environmental factors have not yet been fully evaluated.



### For further information contact:

Mark Cooper-Stanbury by phoning 02 62441251 or visit:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737418534&libID=10737418533>

## Nichole Graduates!

Last month, Nichole Ansell was officially awarded her *Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Health)* from the University of Western Sydney. Nichole commenced her traineeship in June 2005 as an Aboriginal Trainee Environmental Health Officer with the Hunter New England Area Health Service.

Nichole was also named on the 2010 Deans Merit list which recognises students for their outstanding academic achievement over the past 12 months of study.



Nichole completed her traineeship in 2010 and is now an Environmental Health Officer based in our Newcastle office.

**Congratulations Nichole!**

## It's FluTracking time!

*When the temperature drops and the days grow shorter it means the winter Flu Season is upon us! It also means that it's FluTracking time ...*

*FluTracking* is an online health surveillance system used to detect epidemics of influenza. The main aim of *FluTracking* is to develop a system that can rapidly determine:

- the onset of influenza in Australia and subregions
- the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine
- the severity of circulating influenza strains
- if influenza strains have changed

*FluTracking* is always looking for additional participants who live in Australia and have easy access to email on a weekly basis. It doesn't matter if participants are vaccinated or unvaccinated. For additional information and to join *FluTracking*, visit:

<http://www.flutracking.net/>

## Mosquito Borne Viruses

NSW Health is warning residents to cover up in order to avoid mosquito bites. NSW Health Director of Health Protection Dr Jeremy McAnulty said during early autumn people still need to be vigilant about mosquito borne viruses.

*"As families head out before the approaching cooler weather, they still need to take precautions against mosquitoes, to cover up, to use effective repellents and to light mosquito coils," he said.*

Although mosquito numbers are starting to fall with the cooler weather, people can still be bitten, especially if they visit or live near bushland, rivers or wetlands. Mosquitoes are usually most active in the hours after sunset and again around dawn. There are still high numbers of mosquitoes in some parts of NSW.

*"Many mosquitoes can carry Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses. More serious viruses such as Murray Valley Encephalitis and Kunjin are also a risk in NSW this year," said Dr McAnulty.*

*"Ross River and Barmah Forest virus infections can cause symptoms including tiredness, rash, fever, and sore and swollen joints. These symptoms usually last a few days, but some people may experience more debilitating symptoms for weeks and occasionally even months." he said.*

Rare, more serious, infections carried by mosquitoes, such as Murray Valley Encephalitis and Kunjin virus - which can both cause a severe brain infection - have been detected in NSW this year. There is no specific treatment for these viruses so prevention depends on avoiding mosquito bites, especially when mosquitoes are most active.

## Fight the Bite!

The following advice should be offered to reduce the risk of mosquito borne illness:

- Try to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes that can carry viruses are usually most active in the hours after sunset and again around dawn.

**Fight the Bite!**

Mosquitoes are going to be out in force this summer. Mosquitoes can give people serious diseases like Ross River Virus, Barmah Forest Virus and Murray Valley Encephalitis. Follow these 4 simple steps to protect your family from mosquito bites.

- 1 Try and avoid areas where mosquitoes are common, like swamps and marshlands.
- 2 Wear loose, long and light coloured clothing, especially around dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- 3 Wear mosquito repellent. Use brands that contain either DEET or Picaridin, apply to all uncovered skin and follow the label directions.
- 4 Get rid of mosquitoes around the house by using plug-in insecticide mats, flying insect knock-down sprays and fly screens. Remove any water-holding containers outside the house where mosquitoes could breed.

For more information:  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

NSW GOVERNMENT | Health

- When outside, cover up as much as possible with light-coloured long sleeved and legged, loose-fitting clothing and covered footwear.

- Use an effective repellent on all exposed skin. Re-apply repellent within a few hours, as protection wears off.

- The best mosquito repellents contain Diethyl Toluamide (DEET) or Picaridin.

- The stronger the concentration of an insect repellent, the less frequently it will need to be applied. Repellents containing low concentrations of DEET or Picaridin provide shorter periods of protection.

- Topical repellents are not recommended for use on children under three months. Use of physical barriers such as netting of prams, cots and play areas is preferred. Repellents containing less than 10% DEET or Picaridin are safe for older children if applied according to instructions. Parents or carers should apply repellent.

- Light mosquito coils or use vapourising mats indoors. Devices that use light to attract and electrocute insects are not effective.

- Cover all windows, doors, chimneys, vents and other entrances with insect screens.

- When camping, use flyscreens on caravans and tents or sleep under mosquito nets.

Download the 'Fight the Bite!' Poster from:

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/resources/publichealth/environment/hazards/pdf/fight\\_the\\_bite.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/resources/publichealth/environment/hazards/pdf/fight_the_bite.pdf)

\* \* \* \* \*

NSW Health fact sheets on mosquito borne diseases including Murray River Encephalitis (MVE) virus, Kunjin virus, Ross River Fever or Barmah Forest virus can be found at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/index.asp>

## Conferences & Training

Public Health Emergency Management 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)

Best Practice Regulatory Services  
Compliance and Investigations Workshop  
"Reducing Risk, Increasing Professionalism"  
Fairfield RSL Sydney, 12-13 May 2011.

Details: [www.bprs.com.au](http://www.bprs.com.au)

Erosion and Sediment Control Workshops  
Newcastle, NSW 12-13 & 19-20 May 2011

Details: Zoe Slater, CET Ph. 4954 4997

Environmental Health Australia (NSW inc)  
2011 Annual State Conference

Tweed Heads, 23 - 24 May 2011

Details: Margaret Hind [nsw@eh.org.au](mailto:nsw@eh.org.au)

Environmental Health Australia (NSW inc)  
Food Surveillance School 2011

Merrylands Sydney, 24 - 26 August, 2011

Details: Margaret Hind [nsw@eh.org.au](mailto:nsw@eh.org.au)

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)

12th World Congress in Environmental Health  
New Technologies, Healthy Human Being and  
Environment

Vilnius, Lithuania, 21-27 May 2012

Details: <http://www.ifeh2012.org/welcome>

## Australian Standards, AS/NZS 3666, Legionella Control Australia

Australian Standards AS/NZS 3666 has been updated and it is out for public comment.

CIBSE, SBSE and AIRAH have come together to facilitate an information session on the changes and what they may mean for us. Clive Broadbent OAM is the key presenter. Clive is an internationally recognised expert in the field of Legionnaires Disease, and a key player in the long term development of this Standard.

Clive will talk through the proposed changes to Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Standard, and introduce the proposed new 'Part 4' Standard. This will be followed by a discussion, and the views of the audience will be passed on to Standards Australia to assist in their final deliberations.

Spaces are limited.

When: 5.30pm for 6:00pm, Wednesday 4th May 2011

Where: Chatswood RSL, 1 Thomas St, Chatswood  
(next to the railway station)

Cost: \$15 Members, \$25 Non Members

Details: Phone Monica Love on 0422 759 807

## 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

Nicole Hutchings, EHO

Ruth Williams, Trainee EHO

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**P: (02) 6764 8000**

Taree Office

PO Box 966

Taree NSW 2430

P: (02) 6515 1853

F: (02) 6515 1804

**P: (02) 4924 6499, request EHO on call**

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Internet: [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/hnep/](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/hnep/)