

Safe Drinking Water Act, Goulburn-Murray Water... and you!

What is the Safe Drinking Water Act about?

The Safe Drinking Water Act aims to ensure safe drinking water is supplied to consumers.



Blackwater from Pranjip Creek entering the Goulburn River (February 2016)

Why is GMW involved with Safe Drinking Water?

Water supplied by GMW customers is not suitable for human consumption without first being properly treated.

However, some GMW customers are urban water corporations that treat and supply water to thousands of households. This water comes from 'open catchments' and GMW must identify and, where possible, reduce the risks to town water supply offtakes.

Town water supply offtakes can be located in GMW storages, waterways downstream of storages and even in irrigation channels.

What are the hazards to drinking water?

Varying amounts of naturally occurring and man-made substances can make drinking water unsafe:

- Pathogens e.g. cryptosporidium and *E.coli*,
- Algae toxins e.g. blue green algae,
- Chemicals e.g. pesticides, and
- Radiological e.g. mining waste.

Where do hazards come from?

'Open catchments' are those in which the land is used for a variety of purposes. Farming, towns, forests, industry and recreation may occur in an open catchment, which can each affect water quality in different ways. Natural events, including fires and floods, can also contribute to poor water quality.

How does GMW manage risks?

GMW identifies, assesses and, where possible, controls risks to water quality. GMW does the following to reduce risks (just to name a few!):

- Maintains and improves facilities around GMW storages e.g. public toilet and wastewater system upgrades,
- Erosion prevention and repair works around storages and along channels (including plastic or rock lining),
- Manages houseboat wastewater,
- Uses herbicides responsibly,
- Conducts blue green algae monitoring & issues recreation warnings,
- Has input to development planning, and
- Responds to incidents.



Plastic lined channel at Tongala

Your role in safe drinking water

Catchment-to-tap protection of drinking water involves us all.

If you become aware of an incident or circumstance that may affect water quality or GMW customers, report it on 1800 064 064 – at any time.

Recreation

Reduce the impact of your recreational activities on water quality by making sure you:

- Obey boating speed limits and reduce speed near the shore,
- Launch boats only at signed sites,
- Obey refuelling and wastewater rules for houseboats,
- Avoid high erosion risk areas, and
- Dispose of all rubbish properly.



Blue-green Algae at Lake Eildon marina

Landowners

Reduce the impact of your actions on water quality by making sure you:

- Prevent stock access to waterways,
- Use appropriate stocking rates,
- Regularly inspect and maintain onsite wastewater systems (including septics),
- Ensure that new development or works comply with relevant guidelines,
- Plant trees and shrubs along waterways,
- Use and store fertilisers and pesticides responsibly,
- Have suitable animal waste management (including dairy waste and manure stockpiles), and
- Gain correct approvals before starting works on waterways and/or storages.



Prevent livestock access to channels and waterways

Resources

Department of Health and Human Services:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/drinking-water-in-victoria/protecting-drinking-water-catchments>

See: brochures on **protecting waterways from stock access** and **water catchment land management** at the above website.

Your local Catchment Management Authority:

www.necma.vic.gov.au

www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

www.nccma.vic.gov.au



Lake Buffalo