

FACT SHEET: COPPER, LEAD, CAMPYLOBACTER

Urban water utilities supply safe, high quality drinking water to cities and regions across Australia. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council provide over 250 rigorous guidelines for water utilities to follow. In the most recent National Performance Report which assesses compliance against the Guidelines or licence conditions imposed on the utility, water supply quality compliance remained strong and in the majority of cases was 100 per cent.

Copper and lead

The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and Australian Standards set out which plumbing materials are safe so that drinking water does not have unacceptable levels of metals, including copper and lead. Water utilities monitor these levels regularly to confirm that the treatment and systems and safeguards are working as they should.

Occasionally there are media articles which focus on lead in drinking water. The research referred to in some articles has included tank water, which is more likely to see higher levels of copper and lead due to metals leaching from plumbing. In addition, samples used were taken from brass household taps following long stagnation periods which would have led to increased levels.

Across most of Australia, the water utility's responsibility ends at the point of supply – the customer's water meter. If you are concerned about the materials used in your household fixtures you should contact a registered plumber.

Campylobacter

Water utilities take a number of steps to ensure water is safe to drink, most commonly adding chlorine, which is a safe and effective water to inactivate harmful bacteria and viruses.

Pathogens are also removed through a number of other steps in water treatment. This means there are multiple barriers in place to ensure drinking water is safe.

Campylobacter is a bacteria which can cause gastroenteritis in humans. There have been no reports of *Campylobacter* infections from drinking water in Australia.

Well-treated town water supplies with effective disinfection (such as chlorine) are not at risk from this bacteria.

More information about the specific issues relating to Copper, Lead and Campylobacter is available in the fact sheets contained within the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines version 3.4 dated October 2017.

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/eh52>

Media inquiries:

Sandi Kolbe, Communications Manager

Water Services Association of Australia

Phone: 0427 224 694

Email: sandi.kolbe@wsaa.asn.au