

# Service Standards & Water Plan 3

## Department of Health's perspectives

David Sheehan

Manager, Drinking Water Regulation

# Service Standards Seminar

## The Department of Health's expectations

- Water corporations will supply safe and fit-for-purpose drinking water, recycled water and wastewater services to their customers
- These services will be provided in a cost-effective manner, as long as cost-effectiveness does not compromise the principle objectives of protecting and/or enhancing public health

# Service Standards Seminar

## The Department of Health's regulatory roles

- The regulatory framework for drinking water services, which is administered by the Department, is detailed in the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* and the *Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2005*
- The Department of Health's role in relation to wastewater/recycled water services is the endorsement of the human health aspects of Class A water recycling schemes, and input into whole-of-government policy in relation to the use of alternative water supplies

# Service Standards Seminar

## Provision of safe drinking water

- The regulatory framework for drinking water quality is now seven years old
- The key driver for establishing the regulatory framework was to ensure that wherever in Victoria drinking water is supplied it is safe to drink
- Much has been achieved over the past seven years, but there are still water supplies where ongoing compliance to the state's water quality standards has yet to be achieved
- These non-compliant supplies are predominately small rural supplies

# Service Standards Seminar

Figure 5: Results from the first and second rounds of audits

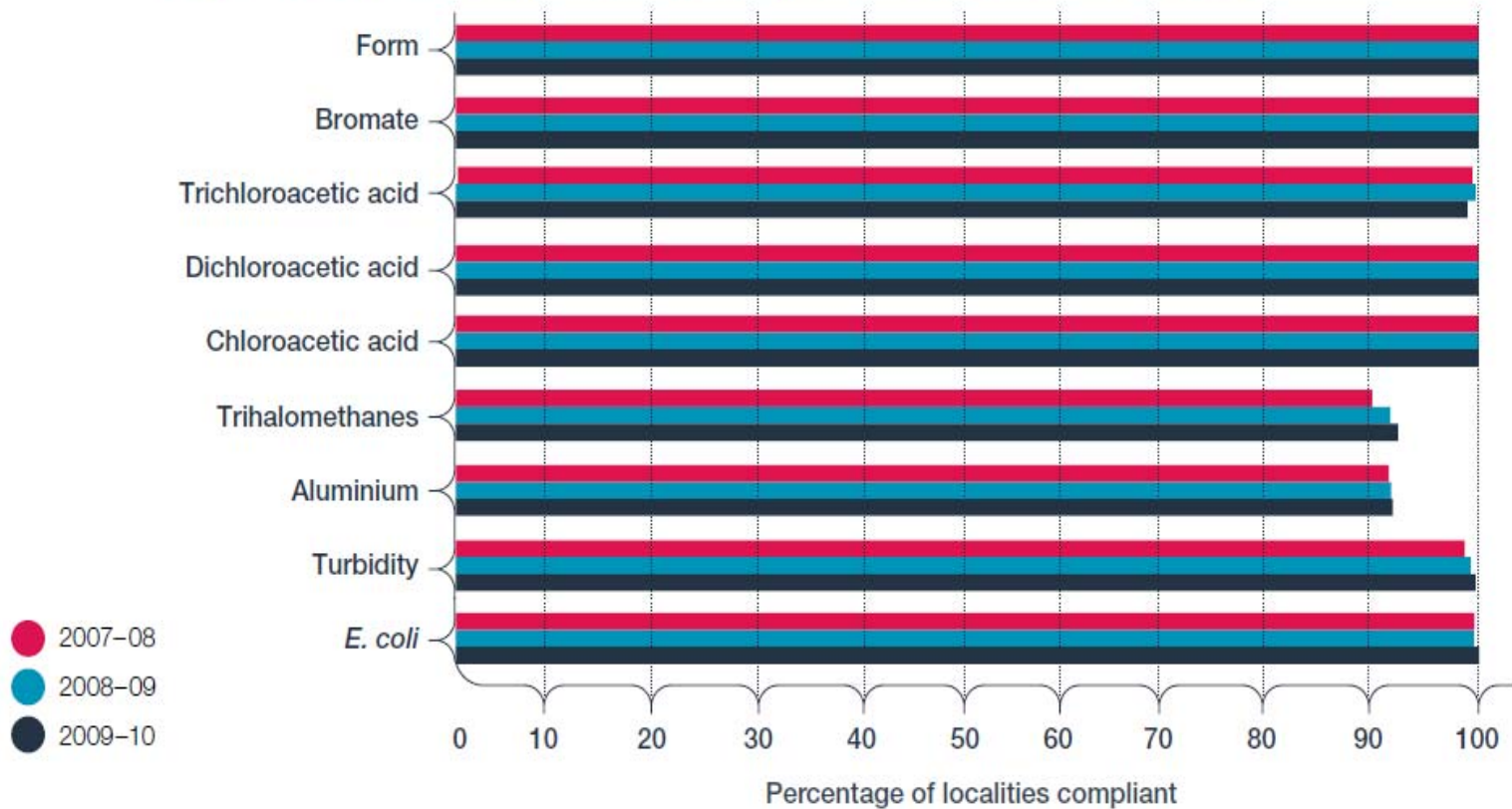


## Improved performance in risk management plan audits:

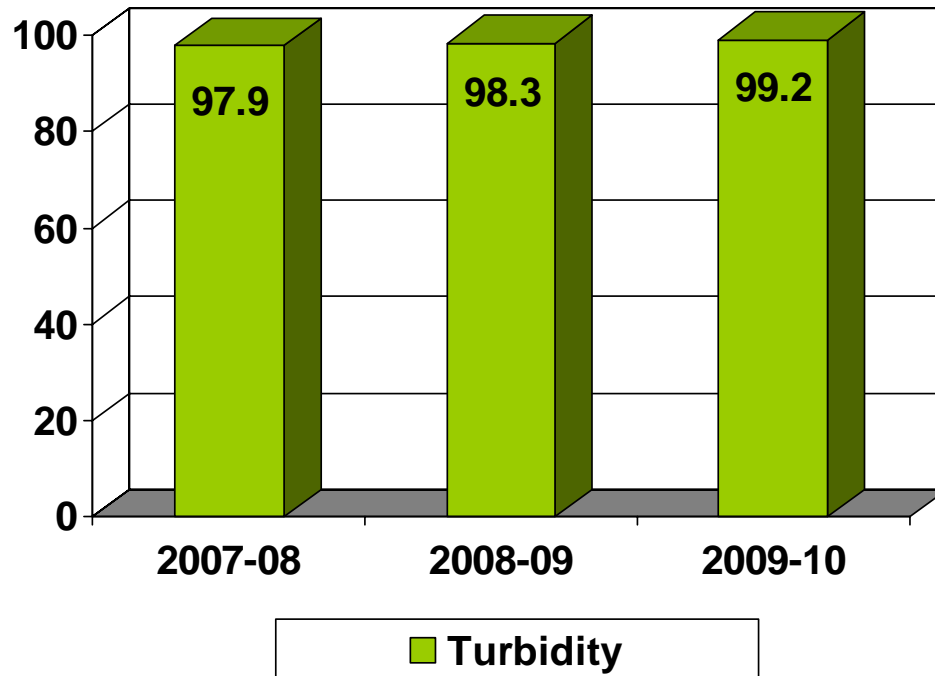
- 10 non-compliant audits in 2008
- 2 non-compliant audits in 2009

# Service Standards Seminar

Figure 4: Performance against water quality standards 2007-08 to 2009-10



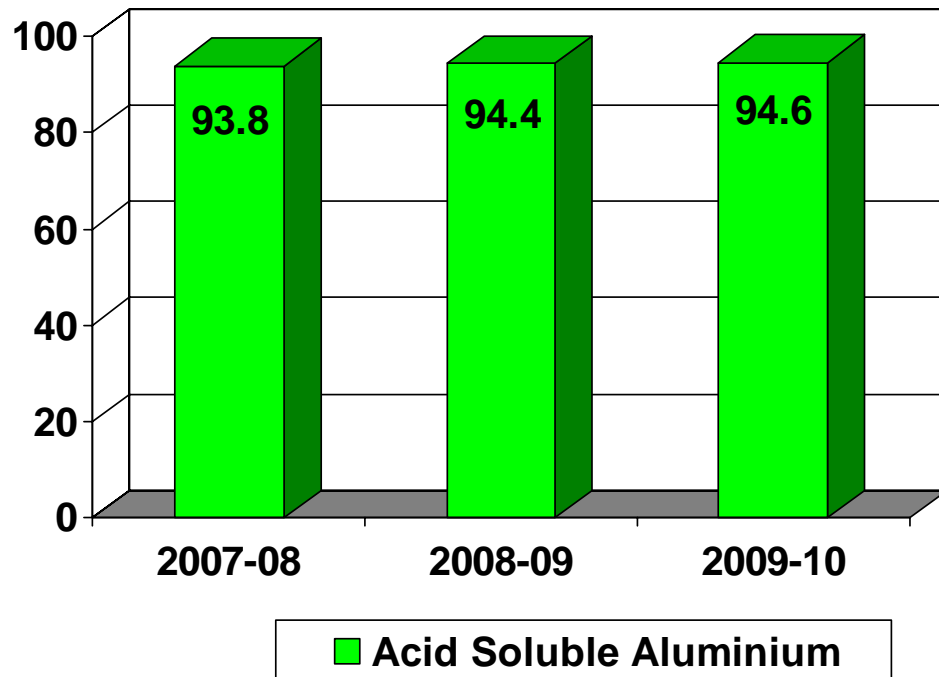
# Service Standards Seminar



## Non-compliant localities in 2009-10:

- Lalbert, Manangatang, Ultima & Nullawil
- 2010-11 floods exacerbated this issue across northern Victoria

# Service Standards Seminar

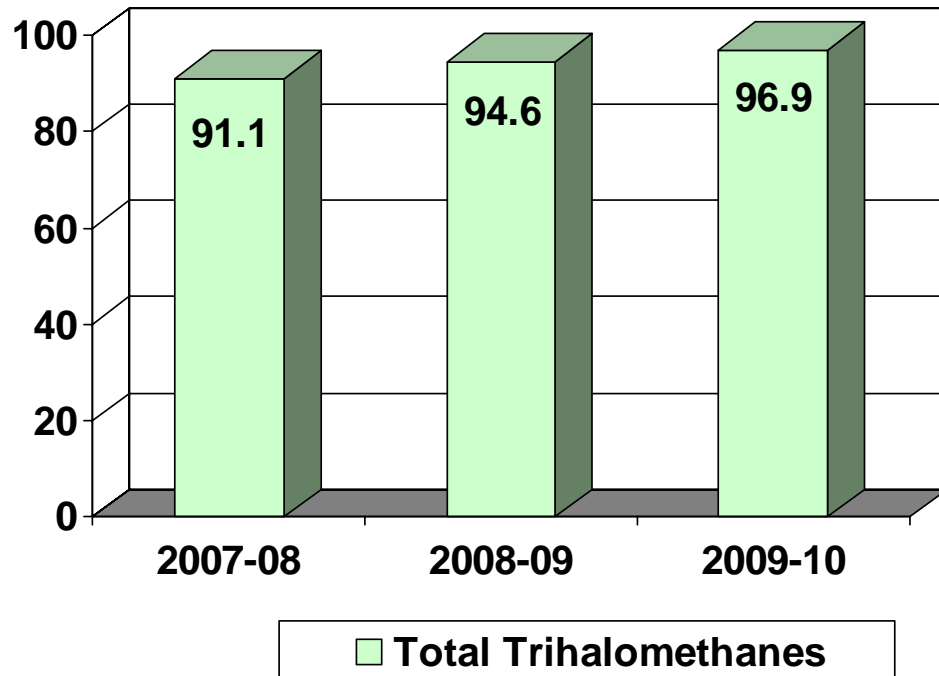


## Non-compliant localities in 2009-10:

- 26 non-compliant localities
- Expect to see a similar level of non-compliance in 2010-11



# Service Standards Seminar



## Non-compliant localities in 2009-10:

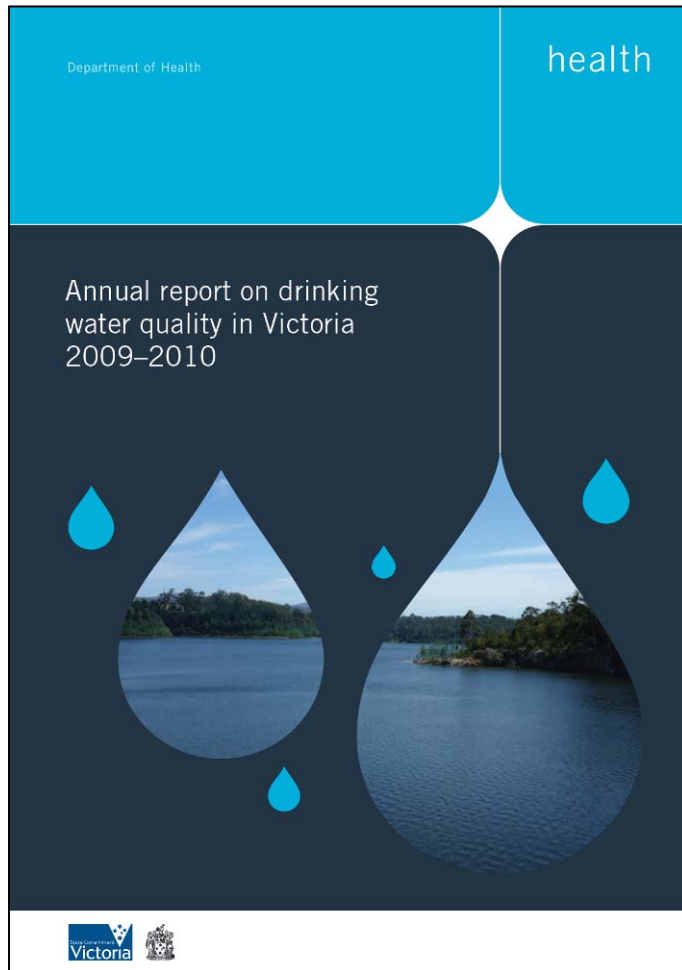
- 15 non-compliant localities
- Steady improvement, but expect to see a decrease in the compliance rate in 2010-11 because of floods

# Service Standards Seminar

## Specific regulatory expectations for Water Plan 3

- All drinking water supplies to comply with the water quality standards detailed in the Regulations
- Implementing multi-barrier treatment systems for all supplies that need them
- Addressing water supplies with elevated levels of total dissolved solids (TDS) or salinity
- A shift in focus to the monitoring of operational performance post 2015, when the next set of Regulations commence
- A focus on training issues for operational staff
- Addressing catchment-related water quality issues

# Service Standards Seminar



## Compliance with water quality standards

- Reasonable expectation that all drinking water supplies will comply with the standards
- Recognised that non-compliance issues largely confined to small rural supplies
- Many non-compliant supplies will require innovative solutions to achieve compliance

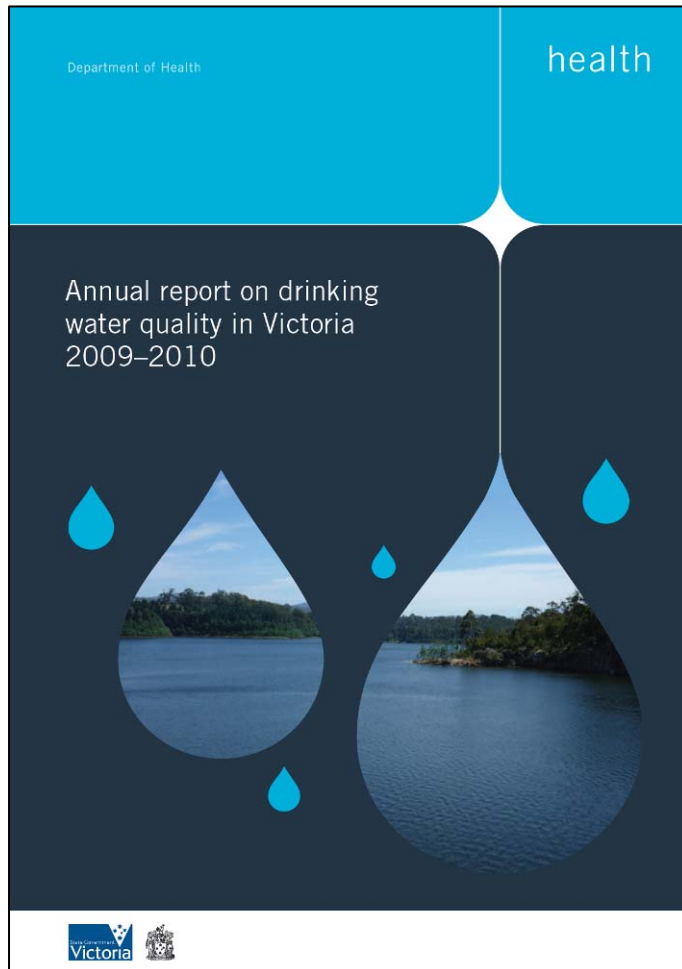
# Service Standards Seminar



## Multiple treatment barriers

- Multiple treatment barriers are the cornerstone of the risk-based approach to water quality management
- Single-barrier supplies sourcing water from high-risk surface catchment likely to present unacceptable risk to customers
- Addressing this issue may again require innovative solutions

# Service Standard Seminar



## Issue of elevated TDS

- TDS is largely treated as an aesthetic parameter in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG)
- Despite this, there is a health dimension in the case where the water is so salty that the water is unpalatable
- Where high TDS water is being supplied as drinking water the expectation is that it will be fit for purpose (that is, palatable)



# Service Standards Seminar



## Monitoring of operational performance

- The primary focus of risk management should be on ensuring treatment processes perform consistently
- Relying on water quality results collected at customer taps only informs a reactive response
- The Department of Health will consult widely with industry and other stakeholders in the lead up to 2015

# Service Standards Seminar

Department of Health

health

Victorian framework  
for water treatment  
operator competencies  
Best practice guidelines

A joint initiative of the Department of Health  
and the Victorian Water Industry Association

Victoria  
The Future is On

VICTORIAN WATER  
Water Services Corporation

## Training of operational staff

- Operational staff manage and maintain the treatment barriers that help achieve fit-for-purpose water and wastewater
- It is expected that they will have the skills and training to fulfil this role
- Ageing workforce, predicted skills shortages and new technology will increase the importance of staff training

# Service Standards Seminar



## Catchment management

- Water catchment areas should be considered the first treatment barrier for water supplies
- Open catchments require high levels of stakeholder engagement, across agencies and with private landholders
- Whole-of-Government approach required to address this issue



# Service Standards Seminar

health
Department of Health  
Guidance on Water Plan 3

---

health
Guidance Note No.14

## Guidance to water corporations on the Department of Health's regulatory requirements with regard to Water Plan 3

**Introduction**

The purpose of this Guidance Note is to provide water corporations with information on the Department of Health's regulatory requirements with regard to Water Plan 3, which will assist corporations as they prepare the exposure drafts of their water plans for the regulatory period commencing 1 July 2013.

This Guidance Note has been prepared in consultation with the Essential Services Commission and the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Officer of Water, and provides advice specifically in relation to regulatory obligations under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* (the Act), the *Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2005* (the Regulations) and fluoridation matters under the *Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973*.

**Drinking water quality regulatory framework**

It is anticipated that the Act will remain in its current form for the regulatory period commencing 1 July 2013. The Act requires water suppliers to supply drinking water that satisfies defined water quality standards, water suppliers and water storage managers to continually anticipate and manage existing and emerging risks to drinking water supplies, and the disclosure of relevant information to the public.

Activities undertaken in accordance with the Act are to be undertaken in accordance with the risk management plan requirements and audit and disclosure requirements set out in the Act. Water suppliers, particularly, are advised to ensure that where drinking water supplies are drawn from multi-use or unprotected surface water catchments, any risks arising from such sources are addressed, especially for drinking water supplies that traditionally have been disinfected without also being filtered.


It is also anticipated that all water suppliers and water storage managers will be requested to have their risk management plans audited under the Act at least three times during the regulatory period commencing 1 July 2013.

With regard to the Regulations, they are due to sunset in mid 2015, with a new set of Regulations being put in their place. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more details on the proposed changes to the Regulations.

**Examples of activities that may necessary in order to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act**

The following activities are examples of activities that may be necessary to comply with obligations arising from the Act:

- continuation of 'business as usual' activities that flow from current regulatory obligations under the Act or the Safe Drinking Water Regulations


Department of Health

- Guidance Note on the Department of Health's Water Plan 3 expectations has been prepared and released
- The Department would welcome early engagement with water corporations on Water Plan 3

Thank you

health

