
Dr Roscoe Taylor
Director of Public Health

Robert Legge
Break O'Day Mayor

Information for St Helens residents

Director of Public Health Dr Roscoe Taylor and Break O'Day Council Mayor, Robert Legge, said today that they would be writing to all residents in St Helens to provide information about the safety of the town water supply.

The Director of Public Health, Dr Roscoe Taylor, said that he understood that following the recent *Australian Story* program, a number of residents have expressed concern about whether it is safe to drink the water from the town supply.

“I want to reassure residents and visitors to St Helens that none of the information available or presented through the *Australian Story* program at this point in time has demonstrated a need for residents or visitors to St Helens to refrain from drinking from the town water supply. The research presented is highly preliminary, as acknowledged by the scientists themselves.

“The St Helen’s township drinking water supply is taken from a point at depth well below the surface of the River. It is then pumped up to a reservoir and treatment includes foam and scum removal and a sand filtration process.

Previous testing by the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment in 2005 showed representative samples of surface and subsurface water from near the town water intake were non-toxic. Concentrated surface water scum however was toxic, but this was also seen in creek water samples in the George River catchment well above any forestry or agricultural activity.

“I would also like to advise residents with any concerns about cancer that ongoing monitoring of cancer rates in the Break O'Day area has found no evidence of any abnormal trends or rates compared with the rest of Tasmania.

Dr Taylor said that as he said yesterday, the new information contained in the *Australian Story* program raised environmental issues that did warrant further investigation from a number of perspectives. A formal and independent process is now being put in train through the Chair of the Board of the Environment Protection Authority.

Break O'Day Council Mayor, Robert Legge, said the council would assist in helping to disseminate the information to St Helen's residents.

"Letters will be posted to residents as soon as possible and I hope will be received by Friday," Mayor Legge said.

The letter to residents as well as more information on the Department of Health and Human Services' original investigation and advice to the Break O'Day Council regarding the St Helens water supply can be found on the website at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

Contact: Nikki Karpeles 0429 949 807