

# Recreational Water Annual Report

Reporting period 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014

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# Director of Public Health Recreational Water Quality Report 2013-2014

## I. INTRODUCTION

Water-based recreational activities are very popular in Tasmania during summer and most recreational water areas are pristine.

However, while Tasmania has extensive coastline and many inland water bodies, most recreational areas are not easily accessible for recreation.

This results in people attending accessible coastal beaches, freshwater rivers and lakes, especially those close to urban areas with good road access.

The *Recreational Water Quality Guidelines 2007* issued under the *Public Health Act 1997*, require councils to regularly monitor the water quality of municipal areas used for significant recreational activity and respond to identified risks to public health.

Councils must provide an annual report to the Department of Health and Human Services on their activities around recreational water quality monitoring.

Information provided in council annual reports is summarised to produce the *2013-2014 Annual Report on Recreational Water Quality* issued by the Director of Public Health.

This report provides information to the community on water quality at recognised recreational sites in Tasmania.

For further information about individual water quality results contact your relevant local council environmental health officer.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Health Risks from Swimming

Water contaminated by sewage and animal waste often contains a diverse range of pathogenic micro-organisms such as viruses, bacteria and protozoa.

These organisms pose a health hazard when the water is used for recreational activities like swimming and other contact water sports, mainly because in these activities there is a considerable risk that water could be swallowed, or inhaled.

Polluted water may also come into contact with ears, nasal passages, mucous membranes and cuts in the skin, allowing disease-causing organisms to enter the body.

In most cases, any health effects from exposure to contaminated water are, from a medical perspective, relatively minor and short-lived, such as skin rashes, ear and eye infections and gastrointestinal diseases.

However, the potential for more serious diseases such as hepatitis A, protozoan infections and salmonellosis cannot be disregarded (NHMRC 2008).

### 2.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Agencies

Local Tasmanian councils, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and the Department of Health and Human Services all have responsibilities for managing recreational water and protecting human health where the public use such waters.

However, it is recognised that it is not practical for all possible recreational waters in a jurisdiction to be regularly monitored.

Therefore, where a particular area, such as a beach, lake or river is used regularly by a large number of people for primary contact

purposes, it should be monitored in line with these guidelines.

If there is any doubt as to the need for monitoring, the advice of the Director of Public Health should be sought.

However, Section 128 of the *Public Health Act 1997* should be noted:

*An agency, public authority or person managing or in control of water must:*

- a) *manage the water in a manner that does not pose a threat to public health; and*
- b) *on becoming aware that the quality of the water is, or is likely to become, a threat to public health, notify the Director in accordance with any relevant Guidelines.*

Further, it should be noted that monitoring should be undertaken in line with the following procedures.

1. Samples should be taken at the beginning of the swimming season and thereafter taken weekly during the season, which includes the months of December, January, February and March, unless other arrangements are approved by the Director of Public Health.
2. Additional sampling is to be conducted whenever a threat to public health is suspected.
3. Each controlling authority shall consult the director on the proposed sampling program to be used when a threat to public health is suspected.
4. At the end of each swimming season the controlling authority shall prepare a report on recreational water quality for presentation to the director by 30 September each year.

### **3. AUSTRALIAN GUIDELINES FOR RECREATIONAL USE OF WATER**

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) has produced *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water* which were issued in February 2008.

These guidelines were developed to provide information to the public and government agencies on the suitability of waters for recreational use.

They apply to all open water, which is used by the public for recreation.

While the national guidelines have not been developed for regulatory use, they attempt to provide a benchmark to ensure that the use of recreational waters is safe from a water quality perspective.

The guidelines are an excellent resource for the management of the quality of coastal, estuarine and fresh waters used for primary contact recreation.

## **4. COUNCIL RECREATIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 Break O' Day Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Grants Lagoon
2. Wrinklers Lagoon
3. Binalong Bay (Main Beach)
4. Beauty Bay (St Helens)
5. Scamander River Mouth

Sampling details: Sampling was conducted monthly from December – March.

Results: All sampling sites were considered satisfactory for primary contact.

Comments: Signs remain in place to advise the public not to swim during and after rainfall events in enclosed water and river sites.

For more information contact Philip Bingley on (03) 6376 7933.

### **4.2 Brighton Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites: Jordan River

1. Jetty Road

Sampling details: Sampling was conducted weekly from December – March.

Results: Apart from some marginally elevated results in early January, the results have remained consistently low over the sampling period.

Comments: The Jordan River has only limited secondary contact use with primary contact prohibited by signage. For the most part, the Jordan River ceases to flow during the later summer months; however the sampling site is subject to tidal movements.

The Jordan River is sampled as part of the Derwent Estuary Monitoring Program.

For more information contact Brent Basstian on (03) 6263 0332.

### **4.3 Burnie City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Cooee Beach (West End)
2. Cooee Beach (East End)
3. West Beach (West End)
4. West Beach (East End)
5. South Burnie (Yacht Club)
6. Wivenhoe Beach

Sampling details: Fortnightly sampling from January – March.

Results: All sample locations were considered satisfactory for primary contact based upon sample results and historical data.

For more information contact Paddy Kennedy on (03) 6430 5765.

### **4.4 Central Coast Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Midway Point, Penguin
2. Preservation Bay, Penguin – (Surf Club)
3. Johnsons Beach, Penguin – (caravan park)
4. Main Beach, Penguin
5. Picnic Point Beach, West Ulverstone
6. Main Beach, Ulverstone - Surf club
7. Turners Beach
8. Bannons Park, Gunns Plains

Sampling details: Sites were sampled monthly from December – March.

Results: Sampling sites complied with the guidelines values for primary contact activities.

Comments: All sampling sites were suitable for primary contact as approval was sought and granted from the Director of Public Health. Buttons Creek, Ulverstone is no longer sampled. No Swimming signs are in place at that site.

For more information contact Bill Hyndes on (03) 6429 8936.

#### **4.5 Central Highlands Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Clyde River (Hamilton)
2. Derwent River (Lake Meadow Bank)
3. Clyde River (Bothwell)

Sampling details: One sample was taken from each location in April.

Results: Due to the number of samples taken, the results are inconclusive. Based upon the results the areas listed above are suitable for secondary contact except Lake Meadowbank, which is suitable for primary contact.

Comments: Sampling was conducted on a risk management basis.

For more information contact James Wood on (03) 6259 5503.

#### **4.6 Circular Head Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Crayfish Creek
2. Detention River
3. Godfreys Beach
4. Tatlows Beach.

Sampling details: Sampling was undertaken fortnightly from November to March.

Results: Detention River and Crayfish Creek may at times be unsuitable for primary contact recreation. Godfrey's Beach and Tatlows Beach are generally considered within recognised parameters for primary contact. However, three sample results from Tatlows Beach triggered a resample and in two cases the provision of temporary alerts and signs.

Comments: Advisory warning signage has been erected at Crayfish Creek and Detention River to inform swimmers these water bodies may not comply with primary contact guideline values at all times. This was supported by sanitary surveys and additional sampling at Crayfish Creek. Elevated levels at Tatlows Beach were attributed to poor weather conditions at the time of sampling.

For more information contact Matthew Saward on (03) 6452 4848.

#### **4.7 Clarence City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Bellerive Beach
2. Howrah Beach (Silwood St)
3. Howrah Beach (Salacia Ave)
4. Howrah Beach East
5. Little Howrah Beach
6. Doran's Road (Ralphs Bay)
7. Opossum Bay

Sampling details: Beaches and rivers are divided into primary contact and secondary contact sites. Primary contact sites are Howrah Beach, Bellerive Beach and Opossum Bay while Dorans Road (Ralphs Bay) is a secondary contact site.

Primary contact beaches were sampled monthly throughout the year and weekly during the summer. Secondary contact sites were sampled during summer.

Results: Recreational sites were graded as follows: Bellerive Beach, Howrah Beach (Silwood Avenue) and Howrah Beach East were rated as fair. Little Howrah Beach, Dorans Road (Ralphs Bay) and Opossum B received a good rating. Howrah Beach (Salacia Avenue) was rated as poor, with swimming not advised. On occasion variable water quality occurred at Howrah Beach East, Little Howrah Beach and Bellerive Beach. In these cases repeat sampling was undertaken till results met with relevant primary contact guideline values.

Comments: Council intends installing 'flip down' signage to display advisory warnings where two consecutive samples return non-compliant results.

Storm events are considered to have contributed to poor water quality sample results. Although there is no data available on the quantity of storm water entering the catchment, council has commenced rivulet sampling and both Kangaroo Bay and Clarence Plains. As Howrah Beach stormwater continues to be contaminated at times after rainfall, TasWater and council will conduct a joint investigation of the Howrah area sewerage and stormwater infrastructure.

For more information contact Ron Vanderwal on (03) 6245 8658.

#### **4.8 Derwent Valley Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling site:

1. Esplanade, Derwent River, New Norfolk.

Sampling details: Sampling was undertaken weekly from October – March.

Results: Water samples indicated that the site was suitable for primary contact activities with a water quality rating of 'good'.

For more information contact David Bradford on (03) 6261 8525.

#### **4.9 Devonport City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. East Devonport Beach
2. Bluff Beach
3. Back Beach
4. Coles Beach

Sampling details: Samples were taken between the months of October and March. Two samples were taken per location per month, except for March.

Results: All sample sites were suitable for primary contact activities.

For more information contact Karen Welsch on (03) 6424 0507.

#### **4.10 Dorset Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Granite Point
2. Old Pier Beach
3. Trent Water (estuary).

Sampling details: Samples were taken on seven occasions during the summer swimming season from November – March.

Results: While all sample sites were considered suitable for primary contact activities, unexplained elevated levels were detected at Trent Water (estuary) on one occasion. Re-sampling of the site returned results within acceptable limits for primary contact.



For more information contact Chris Wicks on (03) 6352 6500.

#### **4.11 Flinders Island Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

2. Killicrankie Bay
3. Allports Beach
4. Whitemark
5. Lady Barron

Sampling details: Samples were taken on a monthly basis from December – March.

Results: All sample sites were considered suitable for primary contact activities.

Comments: This is the first year council has undertaken sampling of recreational waters. In response to the current results showing compliance with the guidelines, council has removed an existing sign at Lady Barron that warned against swimming in that area.

For more information contact Ms Jaqui Viney on (03) 6359 5005.

#### **4.12 George Town Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Pilots Bay
2. Lagoon Beach
3. York Cove
4. Pipe Clay Bay.
5. Beechford
6. Hillwood

Sampling details: Sampling is undertaken on a monthly basis during the summer months.

Results: The results generally indicate bacterial contamination in the estuary is low and within compliance levels for primary contact activities.

While elevated levels were detected at Lagoon Beach and Pipe Clay Bay in December, subsequent sampling indicated a return to acceptable levels.

For more information contact Chris Wicks on 0431 481429.

#### **4.13 Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Waubs Beach - Bicheno
2. Muirs Beach – Coles Bay
3. Jubilee Beach – Swansea
4. East Shelly Beach – Orford
5. Spring Beach – Orford

Sampling details: Water sampling was conducted on a monthly basis from December – March.

Results: All sample sites were considered suitable for primary contact activities.

For more information contact Phillip Bingley on (03) 6256 5050.

#### **4.14 Glenorchy City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Windermere Beach
2. Elwick Bay

Sampling details: Weekly from December – March.

Results: Results of sampling of Windermere Beach revealed an improvement from the previous year, with only one sample exceeding the trigger level.

This in turn effected a classification change of the site from 'poor' to fair' under the guidelines.

Four samples exceeded trigger levels at Elwick Bay, however the site is not known for primary contact use. It has been graded as 'poor' under the guidelines and is considered suitable for secondary contact.

Comments: The recreational sampling conducted by council is part of the Derwent Estuary Sampling Program. Council has developed a sampling regime and conducted a sanitary survey to further investigate likely points of contamination into the Derwent River. This will include points located along Faulkner's Rivulet. Permanent signs have been erected at the above current sites advising the public that the water quality is not suitable for swimming. The sites are mostly used for boating and fishing and the general public do not swim in these areas.

For more information visit the council's website ([www.gcc.tas.gov.au](http://www.gcc.tas.gov.au)) or call Alex Woodward on (03) 6216 6790.

#### **4.15 Hobart City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Nutgrove Beach (2 sites)
2. Little Sandy Bay Beach (2 sites)
3. Marieville Esplanade

Sampling details: The swimming beaches of Nutgrove (two sites) and Little Sandy Bay (two sites) were sampled weekly from December - March as part of the Derwent Estuary Sampling program. Samples were also collected from Marieville Esplanade.

Results: Three samples exceeded trigger levels throughout the period with no resultant beach closures. The beach catchment area of Nutgrove is the focus of a sanitary survey for possible sources of contamination.

Comments: Sites deemed not suitable for primary contact activities including Marieville Esplanade are signposted accordingly.

For more information contact Mark Dwyer on (03) 6238 2737.

#### **4.16 Huon Valley Council**

Comments: The statutory requirement to conduct recreational water sampling is no longer in place, as approval to cease sampling was obtained in 2012 from the Director of Public Health. However, council will continue to monitor its beaches and respond to complaints, issues or concerns the public may have regarding water quality.

Swimming advisory signs at identified beaches including; Dover Beach, Randalls Bay and Verona Sands provide a proactive means of advising the public of potential contamination due to outfalls from nearby lagoons following rainfall events.

For more information contact Scott Edwards on (03) 6264 0355.

#### **4.17 Kentish Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Lake Barrington – Kentish Park
2. Lake Barrington – Rowing Course

Sampling details: Monthly sampling from November - April

Results: The sample locations were suitable for primary contact activities.

Comments: Council monitors Lake Barrington at Kentish Park which is a popular spot with water skiers and at the International Rowing Course. Water test results were within parameters for primary contact recreation.

For more information contact Ms Georgina Crantock on (03) 6491 2500.

#### **4.18 Kingborough Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Blackmans Bay Beach
2. Blackmans Bay Beach South
3. Kingston Beach (North)
4. Kingston Beach (Middle)
5. Kingston Beach (South)
6. Browns River
7. Taroona Beach
8. Hinsby Beach
9. Howden – Wingara Road
10. Snug Beach
11. Margate – Dru Point
12. Woodbridge-Silverwater Park
13. Conningham Beach
14. Tinderbox Beach
15. Middleton Beach
16. Nebraska Beach
17. Alonnah Beach
18. Quiet Corner
19. Adventure Bay Beach
20. Simmonds Beach

Sampling details: Sampling weekly from December – March.

Results: All the sample sites were considered suitable for primary water contact, with the exception of Browns River which was suitable for secondary contact only. There were no beach closures during the sampling period.

Comments: Warning signs have been placed at Browns River to advise the general public that the water may not be suitable for primary contact. Recreational water quality signs

indicating a water quality grading of good, fair or poor remain in place at: Taroona beach (good), Kingston beach North (fair), Kingston beach Middle (good), Kingston Beach South (fair) and Blackmans Bay Beach (good).

Kingborough Council has an extensive environmental health monitoring program and places signs to alert the general public if samples fail the prescribed guideline values.

For more information contact Abylene McGuire on (03) 6211 8173.

#### **4.19 King Island Council**

The recreational sampling program is conducted on a risk assessment basis due to the absence of pollution sources and the generally good water quality of the recreational areas.

For more information contact James Wood on (03) 6462 1177.

#### **4.20 Latrobe Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Mersey River – end of Shale Road
2. Mersey River – Bells Parade
3. Squeaking Point
4. Panatana Rivulet
5. Port Sorell Pontoon
6. Freer Beach – Shearwater
7. Hawley Beach

Sampling details: Sampling was weekly from December – March.

Results: The Mersey River at Bells Parade was closed for swimming for a number of weeks as four samples (and resamples) from this site returned results exceeding trigger levels. Samples from the end of Shale Road site also exceeded levels on four occasions, but remained open.

Sample results from sites in the Rubicon Estuary indicated water quality remained compliant throughout the summer.

For more information contact Ms Georgina Crantock on (03) 6421 4650.

#### **4. 21 Launceston City Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Waverley Lake
2. First Basin (South Esk River Catchment)
3. Corra Lynn
4. St Leonards Picnic Ground (North Esk River Catchment)

Sampling details: Weekly or fortnightly depending upon site, from December – March.

Results: All sites were generally considered suitable for primary contact during most of the sampling period. On occasions where the water quality was unsuitable, signage was placed in visible locations to warn against swimming and further samples taken until compliance was achieved. Comments: The Tamar River is used throughout the year for rowing and sailing, therefore it is subject to an annual sampling program and this information provides up to date reports to the community on pollution levels in the estuary.

For more information contact Tessa Davies on (03) 6323 3261.

#### **4.22 Meander Valley Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites

1. Egmont Bridge – Meander River
2. Hadspen Picnic Area – South Esk River
3. Bracknell Picnic Area – Liffey River
4. Blackstone Heights – Lake Trevallyn

Sampling details: Sampling was weekly from December – March.

Results: Results from Egmont, Hadspen and Bracknell exceeded the guideline values on a number of occasions. In response public advisories were erected at these sites. Signs remained in place at Bracknell from the end of January, at Hadspen from mid-February and at Ergmont Bridge from mid-March. In all cases warning signs remained in place through to the end of the sampling period, all samples from Lake Trevallyn were compliant for primary contact.

For more information contact Katie Proctor (03) 6393 5300.

#### **4.23 Northern Midlands Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Longford (South Esk River)
2. Perth (South Esk River)
3. Evandale (South Esk River)

Sampling details: Sampling was fortnightly from December – February.

Results: Overall the sample results complied with primary contact guidelines. Intermittent river flows, heavy rainfall and an increase in duck numbers are considered to contribute to fluctuations in results.

For more information contact Chris Wicks on (03) 6397 7313.

#### **4.24 Sorell Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Primrose Beach
2. Park Beach
3. Red Ochre Beach South
4. Red Ochre Beach North

5. Tigerhead Beach (at boat ramp)
6. Tigerhead Beach (at Seventh Ave)

Sampling details: Weekly sampling from December – February.

Results: Primrose Beach, Park Beach, Red Ochre Beach and Tigerhead Beach were all suitable for primary contact with good quality water throughout the sampling season. The exception to this were samples taken on 5 December at Park Beach, Red Orche, South and Tiger Head boat ramp, though re-sampling returned compliant results.

Comments: The results indicate that five of the six sites met the requirements for good water quality under the guidelines and while Red Ochre Beach South is categorized as poor, this is based on only one high result. When current data for Red Orche Beach South is combined with that of the previous three years, it can be considered 'good' water quality. Signs have been erected at Red Ochre Beach (North and South) and Tiger Head Beach (Boat ramp and Seventh Avenue) to inform the public not to swim after heavy rain. Jones Bay is signposted advising against swimming at all times.

For more information contact Greg Robertson on (03) 6269 0041.

#### **4.25 Southern Midlands Council**

No monitoring of recreational waters was conducted by the Southern Midlands Council throughout 2013-2014 as there is no evidence of primary contact activities occurring.

For more information contact Leon McGuinness on (03) 6259 1327

#### **4.26 Tasman Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. White Beach, southern end between lagoon outlets)
2. Nubeena Foreshore

3. Stewarts Bay
4. Shelley Beach

Sampling details: Monthly sampling at all sites from January – March.

Results: Sampling results demonstrated that the locations were suitable for use as primary contact recreational bodies.

Comments: Warning signs remain in place at outfall creeks at Parsons Bay and Stewarts Bay based on a history of poor results. A full sanitary survey is scheduled before the 2014-2015 monitoring season to review and assess sampling locations.

For more information contact Karen Loone on (03) 6250 9200.

#### **4.27 Waratah/Wynyard Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Sisters Beach
2. Sister Creek
3. East Wynyard Beach
4. Boat Harbour Beach
5. Cam River Somerset
6. Somerset Beach

Sampling details: Weekly sampling at Sisters Creek and Cam River sites and monthly at the remaining sites from November – March.

Results: Sample sites were considered suitable for primary contact activities except for Sisters Creek, which is suitable for secondary recreation only. Cam River started the season with poor water quality but quickly returned results within guideline limits.

Comments: Permanent warning signs are in place at Sisters Creek advising the public the water is unsuitable for primary recreation.

For more information contact David Kleyweg on (03) 6443 8342.

#### **4.28 West Coast Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling site:

1. West Strahan Beach

Sampling details: Weekly sampling from December – March.

Results: The above sample site complied with the guideline values for primary contact on all but one occasion.

Comments: The single non-compliant result in early January followed a rain event after an extended dry period. However, as the re-sample returned compliant results, closure was not warranted.

For more information contact Paddy Kennedy on (03) 6471 4715.

#### **4.29 West Tamar Council**

Type of sampling conducted: Bacteriological (Enterococci).

Location of sampling sites:

1. Greens Beach
2. Kelso
3. Beauty Point
4. Redbill Point
5. Deviot
6. Paper Beach
7. Gravelly Beach
8. Rosevears
9. Lake Trevallyn

Sampling details: Samples were taken weekly from December – March.

Results: All sites were suitable for primary contact activities.

Comments: Although occasional elevated results were detected, re-sampling showed a return to acceptable conditions. There were no warning signs placed at any sampling sites during this reporting period.

For more information contact Rick Chippindall on (03) 6323 9300.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

It is the 13th year of reporting on recreational water quality in Tasmania.

Most councils reported having active recreational water quality monitoring programs for the beaches and rivers within their respective municipalities, except for King Island Council and Southern Midlands Council.

These councils only sampled on a risk management basis due to a general absence of readily identifiable diffuse and/or point sources of pollution or areas where the general public swim.

In those instances/locations where council monitoring programs have indicated that swimming is not advisable, appropriate advisory signage has been erected.

The community should note that heavy rainfall events may affect the water quality of recreational areas from time to time, especially near storm water outfalls.

This is mainly due to contaminants on the land being washed into the water with the heavy rainfall.

As a precautionary measure people should avoid swimming near storm water outfalls (if water is flowing) and wait a few days after the rain stops before swimming in urban areas where pollution run-off is likely.

Dr Mark Veitch

**Acting Director of Public Health**

## **REFERENCES**

National Health and Medical Research Council 2008. Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water. Available at [www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh38.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh38.htm)

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