



Mr Malcolm Gray
Senior Commissioner
ICRC
GPO Box 296
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Mr Gray

Issues paper - Secondary water use in the ACT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into secondary water use in the ACT.

The Health Directorate supports the reuse of non-potable water to reduce the demand on the potable water. However, public health must not be compromised when using non-potable sources of water.

The greatest risk to the public is from pathogens in the reuse water. Waterborne pathogens cause outbreaks of illness that can affect a high proportion of the community and in extreme cases cause death. Chemical contamination such as toxins from cyanobacteria can also be a longer term risk to consumers.

The level of treatment required for recycled water is dependent on the source of the water and the final reuse of the water. There are a number of national guidelines produced under the National Water Quality Management Strategy that detail the risks and hazards associated with the various sources of water and the appropriate treatments that are required.

To ensure appropriateness and viability of the reuse scheme it is suggested that an environmental impact assessment, including health and economic impact assessments, be undertaken to determine the practicality of proposed reuse schemes.

I would like to emphasize that the risk to the public from reuse is very dependent on the final use of the treated water. For example the risk to the public from the irrigation of public open spaces, is significantly less than when treated effluent is piped to individual households where young children will come into contact with, and potentially consume, the water.

I understand you would like to meet with the relevant Health Directorate officers to discuss the submission in detail. The contact for further discussion is Mr John Woollard of the Health Protection Service. Mr Woollard can be contacted on 6205 1722 or john.woollard@act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Ian Thompson
A/g Director-General
Health Directorate

24 January 2012