No. 314

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Renewables and Essential Services:

Water supply in Borroloola region

1. How regularly have water quality tests been conducted on the drinking water supply for residents in the Borroloola region?

   The sampling frequency for the Borroloola Township which includes the Mara, Yanyula and Garawa 1 and 2 town camps as follows:

   - Weekly bacteriological testing.
   - Six monthly physical, chemical and metals testing.
   - Alternate yearly radiological testing of source water.

   All testing is undertaken in accordance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

2. How regularly are tests conducted in other Aboriginal communities?

   Water quality sampling is undertaken in accordance with Power and Water Corporation's Drinking Water Quality Monitoring Program which is endorsed each year by the Department of Health.

   The program serves to detail the frequency of testing of each water quality parameter in each location. The assigned frequency of the testing is risk based.

   As pathogens represent the biggest risk to the consumer as their presence in the water is sudden and sometimes cannot be predicted, Power and Water undertakes more frequent microbiological tests. This testing is classified as verification monitoring. Power and Water also monitors chlorine residuals in each aboriginal community. The monitoring of the chlorine residuals allows Power and Water to react to any changes in the disinfection performance that would in turn put consumers at risk of pathogens.

3. Is historic information detailing the results of testing of drinking water in the Borroloola region, or other Aboriginal communities available for the past decade? If so, please provide details of this information.

   Power and Water releases an annual Drinking Water Quality Report which is available on our website that contains the historic information.

4. What causes are being explored as part of any findings of lead contamination in the drinking water?

   Power and Water investigated the cause of water contamination in Garawa I and Garawa 2.

Many plumbing fittings and fixtures for example contain lead, which can enter the water when they corrode and it is suspected that this legacy infrastructure (not belonging to Power and Water) contributed to the elevated levels of lead that were detected during routine sampling.

Power and Water subsequently checked, identified and replaced corroded fittings and flushed the system, which has seen lead levels return below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.