BAC-BR-18471

Professor Euan M Wallace AM
Secretary
Department of Health

50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Secretary

**STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH’S WATER UNIT**

I am pleased to provide you with my expectations for the Department of Health’s (the department) Water Unit to guide the regulator’s business planning processes.

In my portfolio as Minister for Health, I administer a range of Acts and regulations designed to promote wellbeing and to protect the health of the Victorian community.

I am committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Victorians including protecting the Victorian community from the risks and harms associated with water quality.

As Minister for Health, I am responsible for administering the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* (the Act) and this guidance should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in this Act. This guidance should also be read in the context of any other legislative and non-legislative obligations on the Water Unit.

Based on consultation with the department about the government’s priorities and emerging risks, my expectations for the Water Unit are as follows.

* Continue to work with relevant water agencies to address the vulnerabilities in Melbourne’s Silvan drinking water supply as identified from the Silvan drinking water quality incident in 2020.
* Review and consider proposed amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015 and the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* administration levy.
* Develop and implement a clear risk-based audit framework to the Safe Drinking Water Quality Risk Management Plan process.
* Review and improve standard operating procedures for responding to water quality incidents including preparedness and contingency planning activities for agencies.
* Facilitate regular forums for engagement with stakeholders to assist them in meeting their obligations under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* and the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015.
* Support local government to regulate public aquatic facilities under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*
* Increase regulatory oversight of fluoridation activities in accordance with the *Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973.*

In addition, I expect all regulators in the health portfolio to commit to and action:

* Contributing to health, wellbeing, and safety outcomes for Aboriginal people and the advancement of Aboriginal self-determination.
* Climate change adaptation and enhancing health system resilience through the improvement of environmental sustainability.

I request the department’s Water Unit to incorporate these expectations into their business plans and include milestones for when the team will meet these expectations, and report on progress. The business plans should also include appropriate milestones to review the content of this letter and to advise me when it needs to be updated or renewed. At any time, I may request that you report on meeting my expectations or issue a new statement of expectations letter.

I further request the department’s Water Unit to undertake a light touch review of the expectations in this letter as part of their annual reporting obligations and to advise me if there are any refinements they would recommend.

I look forward to the Water Unit working continuously towards achieving best practice in the administration and enforcement of regulation.

Yours sincerely

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

 1 / 7 / 2023