

Attn: Chief of Staff; News Editor; News Producer

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For immediate release

Media Release

SORELL WATER SUPPLY GETS ALL CLEAR FROM SOUTHERN WATER AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Southern Water has lifted the boil water alert notice for the township of Sorell after water samples taken from the supply over two successive days were given the all-clear.

The alert was put in place as a precaution on Sunday evening following consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services after sampling revealed increased levels of bacteria in the water supply.

Executive Manager Service Delivery, Mr Ian Dunbabin, said Southern Water had immediately undertaken a combined program of disinfecting and flushing the system to bring the supply back to the desired standard.

He said the program had been successful, with test results from samples taken on Monday and Tuesday showing that the quality of the water was again meeting Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

“Investigations into the problems that have arisen in recent days are continuing but we may never find the exact cause,” he said. “In the case of Rosny and Montagu Bay we suspect birds or animals may have contaminated the reservoir at Lindisfarne which is not roofed. Problems also are known to arise at this time of year with the change in season bringing rapid temperature changes which can increase bacteria levels in the water supply.

“We have a program to roof up to 20 uncovered reservoirs in the south that may be prone to contamination from external sources,” he said. “The roofing program will begin in the new year.

He said a similar boil water alert issued on 20 November for a small number of customers in Glen Rose Drive in Brighton had also been lifted after test results came back clear today.

The testing regime

Mr Dunbabin said that since taking over responsibility for the management of water supply sources throughout southern Tasmania on 1 July this year Southern Water had instituted a rigorous testing regime to ensure public health was protected.

“Our concern is to ensure that the water we supply to our customers complies at all times with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines,” Mr Dunbabin said. “We take samples from all our water supplies on a weekly basis at a number of points throughout the supply system. This means we track the quality of water from the source right through to the most remote point along the supply pipeline.

“These samples are tested by an accredited laboratory and if they fall below acceptable standards we report this immediately to the Department. If there is any risk to the health of our customers we will not hesitate to put in place a temporary boil alert notice. While this may be a short term inconvenience we believe it is in the best interests of the Tasmanian community, particularly children, the elderly or those with health problems.

“We very much appreciate the support of the media in helping us to get this information to our customers, particularly when the problems arise over the weekend or at night when it is difficult to contact customers by other means at short notice.”

Mr Dunbabin said residents of communities who were on permanent boil water alerts while long term solutions to problems in their areas were found received regular updates on their alert status via direct mail, advertisements in newspapers and posters in key locations and on the Southern Water website. He said the assistance of local councils in distributing information to ratepayers was also of great value.

When a boil water alert is in place residents and businesses should ensure:

- water is brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute and allowed to cool before use
- cool boiled water should be used for drinking, food preparation, washing of un-cooked foods (such as salads or seafood), making ice and cleaning of teeth
- dishes should be washed in hot soapy water or in a dishwasher.

Owners of properties are responsible for passing on boil water alert information to tenants or lessees.

For further information contact Sophie Shelswell-White on 0413 264 417