Updated 20 April 2020

Water Quality Q&A

All taps that will be used for regular drinking or food preparation (eg in tea rooms, dining rooms, staff rooms etc) have been individually tested and found to comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines[1].

Some new plumbing fittings may initially leach and release small amounts of materials such as lead and nickel into the water.

Flushing and regular use of taps and a small number of tap replacements has been effective in reducing the concentration of these materials in K-Block taps.

Is the water in K-Block safe for staff and patients to drink?

All taps to be used for regular drinking or food preparation (eg in tea rooms, dining rooms, staff rooms etc) have been individually tested and found to comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines[1].

Patients are currently provided with bottled water and this standard practice will continue after K-Block is occupied.

Testing of a representative sample of bathroom sink mixers and showers has confirmed that they also comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

A proportion of the sanitary taps of a 'goose neck' design (eg at handwashing and cleaning basins) continue to have elevated levels of heavy metals (mainly nickel) in the first 125mL of water released, if they haven't been used or flushed recently.

As a precautionary measure all sanitary taps of a 'goose neck' design will be signed "Do Not Drink".

Water quality monitoring will continue.

Goose Neck Tap

'Do Not Drink' Sign

[1] *Note: Exceptions being four recently replaced taps yet to be tested and a boiling water unit that returned a high result on 15 April 2020. These have been individually signed "DO NOT DRINK" until testing confirms samples are within Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.*

What water testing has occurred and what are the results?

K-Block has about 1 300 water outlets. Hundreds of tests have been completed by both the builder and by the RHH Redevelopment project team.

Most results across K-Block have been within Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

All taps likely to be used regularly for drinking or food preparation such as tearooms and dining rooms have been individually tested.

A representative sample of the rest of the fixtures have been tested.

What impacts on water quality?

Factors that can impact on water quality include:

- town water supply
- water holding systems for buildings
- manufacture and installation of plumbing fittings and fixtures eg pipes and tapware
- length of time water is stagnant in pipes and frequency of water use.

What is the quality of Hobart's water?

Greater Hobart's water quality is safe to drink.

Independent testing of the main TasWater water supply indicates it meets water quality guidelines.

Hobart's water is 'soft'.

Due to the high purity and water softness of Tasmanian water, this initial leaching can be faster than found in other parts of the world.

What impact does soft water have on plumbing?

'Soft water' has very low levels of dissolved material in solution. It has a tendency to leach small amounts of materials such as calcium, iron, zinc and other metals including nickel and lead from surfaces, such as the plumbing and fittings, that it contacts.

How do you stop corrosion of plumbing?

Newly installed plumbing fittings can have a period of corrosion until a protective film of metal oxides and other deposits form on the metal surfaces and reduces exposure to water.

This does not generally impact the function of the fitting however the materials that can be initially released may initially impact on the quality of the water.

Flushing or regular use of the fittings prevents stagnation in the pipes and reduces concentrations of materials in the water.

If the water supply is 'soft', treatment of the water can also reduce its potential to leach low levels of materials into the drinking water.

What holding system does K-Block have?

K Block has an isolated water supply provided by header tanks.

Independent testing of the water supply to these tanks indicates that the incoming water is safe to drink.

How has the manufacture and installation of plumbing impacted on water quality?

The Building Code of Australia requires that plumbing fixtures and fittings are fit-for-purpose and must carry WaterMark certification.

Plumbing products used in K-Block are all WaterMark certified.

Debris can also be lodged in plumbing during installation which requires flushing during commissioning to ensure its removal.

Why is water sitting in pipes an issue and should I flush my taps at home before drinking the water?

The length of time water remains in unflushed pipes and fittings can impact on the quality of the water.

Exposure to lead and other heavy metals in the environment is a recognised concern for many international health agencies.

In the home, the National Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) recommendations advise to flush cold water taps used for drinking and cooking for about 30 seconds first thing in the morning to draw fresh water through the tap.

After long periods of non-use like after holidays, flushing the home outlets used for drinking and cooking for about two to three minutes is recommended. Water can be collected for other purposes like use on the garden.

For More information

For more information on water quality please visit:

Australian Drinking Water Guidelines https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-drinking-water-guidelines

WaterMark Certification https://www.abcb.gov.au/Product-Certification/WaterMark-Certification-Scheme

National Environmental Health Standing Committee (eHealth) recommendations: https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A12B57E41EC9F326CA257BF0001F9E7D/$File/Lead-plumbing-products-Guidance-Statement-July2018.pdf