

Guidelines to Report Major Environmental Health Issues to Queensland Health

Guidelines for environmental health workers (EHWs) reporting major environmental health issues

1. The aim of this reporting framework is to *assist* environmental health workers (EHWs*) and community councils** to identify, resolve and manage environmental health issues that may present a major risk to the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.
2. The reporting framework 'Report Form' is only to be sent to your local Queensland Health Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator if the environmental health issue is a major health risk.
3. The definition of a major issue is:

For new or future issues

- The issue may cause major illness or injury soon after exposure. Examples may include contaminated drinking water supply, electrical fault endangering lives, leaking septic tank.
- The issue may cause major illness or injury in the medium to long-term following ongoing exposure. An example may include blocked sewerage pipes that affects a number of houses.

For old issues

- The issue is persistent, re-occurring or unresolved and may cause major illness or injury. Examples may include dust from unsealed roads or poor design of stormwater system.
4. If there remains some doubts on whether an environmental health issue is a major issue the EHW should contact your local Queensland Health Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator for advice (see Appendix A for contact details). Feel free to contact your local Queensland Health Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator on any environmental health matter concerning your community.
 5. Only send the 'Report Form' to your local Queensland Health Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator after you have reported the issue to your community council. This allows them to recognise this problem as an issue in your community. Once your community council is aware of the issue the 'Report Form' should be sent to Queensland Health straight away.
 6. Raise the issue with your relevant council staff (eg. Essential Services Officer, Housing Officer).

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7. Ensure the issue is raised with the relevant government agency, where appropriate (eg. poor water quality and sewerage problems should be raised with the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy). The person responsible to contact the government agencies is determined by your community council.
8. Use a separate 'Report Form' for each individual issue.
9. Include on the 'Report Form' a list of attachments that assist in understanding the issue. Attachments may include photographs, graphs, maps, samples, complaint forms, etc.
10. If the community council can resolve a major issue without the support of other agencies the 'Report Form' should still be forwarded to Queensland Health for information sharing. Once the issue has been resolved or managed the community council should advise Queensland Health of the outcome.
11. These reporting guidelines will assist the community council to prioritise environmental health issues. Thereby, ensuring major issues are managed in accordance with the health risk. This is intended to minimise unresolved issues.
12. The roles and responsibilities of the EHW's and Queensland Health under this reporting framework are:

Roles and Responsibilities	
EHWs in community councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report all issues to the community council and recommend solutions • Report all issues to Queensland Health in line with these guidelines • Raise all issues with relevant council staff (eg. Essential Services Officer, Housing Officer) • Ensure issues are raised with the relevant government agency • Assist in resolving all environmental health issues.
Queensland Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liase closely with the EHW on reported issues • Provide advice and assistance to the EHW to resolve and manage the health risk from the issues reported • Liase with the community council to assist in resolving and managing the health risk from reported issues • Liase with other government agencies in conjunction with the community council • Assess the health risks, confirm the health significance of the issues, prioritise issues, review management options, and review resource requirements • Liase with other stakeholders in conjunction with the community council • Assist in raising issues with the Indigenous Environmental Health Regional Forum and Indigenous Environmental Health Government Agency Group.

These roles and responsibilities are undertaken in collaboration between the EHW, community council and Queensland Health, as appropriate.

For the purposes of this reporting framework:

* 'Environmental Health Workers' includes environmental health professionals

** 'community councils' includes local governments

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Appendix A

Queensland Health contact details

Contact	Position (Unit)	Contact details
Clayton Abreu	Indigenous Environmental Health Program Officer Tropical Population Health Unit Cairns	Phone: 4050 3622 Fax: 4031 1440 clayton_abreu@health.qld.gov.au PO Box 1103, Cairns QLD 4870
Eddie Bobongie	Area Environmental Health Worker Cape York Health Service District Weipa	Phone: 40906101 Mob: 0429051258 Fax: 4069 7405 eddie_bobongie@health.qld.gov.au Cape York Health Service District Weipa QLD 4874
Darling Downs Population Health Unit (Southern Area Health Service)	Position Vacant (Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator) Southern Area Health Service Toowoomba	Phone: 46319829 Fax: 46394772 PO Box 1775, Toowoomba QLD 4350
Elva Gela	Area Health Worker Tropical Population Health Unit Townsville	Phone: 47539023 Fax: 47539011 elva_gela@health.qld.gov.au
Del Passi	A/Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator Primary Health Care Centre Thursday Island	Phone: 4069 0436 Fax: 4069 2862 del_passi@health.qld.gov.au PO Box 391 Thursday Island QLD 4875
Central Queensland Population Health Unit	Position Vacant Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator Central Population Health Unit Rockhampton	Phone: 4920 6897 Fax: 4921 3230 PO Box 946, Rockhampton QLD 4700

Appendix B

The following issues may lead to major environmental health problems in your community and are sometimes related to poor design, poor practices, inadequate maintenance, damage, or poor planning.

Sewerage (waste matter)

- collection
- site management
- infrastructure (eg. treatment, pipes, septic, lines, tanks)
- recycling
- other.

Water

- collection
- site management
- infrastructure (eg. treatment plant, pipes, lines, tanks)
- recycling (eg. stormwater)
- quantity
- quality
- other.

Rubbish (waste matter)

- collection
- site management
- infrastructure (eg. local tip/rubbish dump)
- recycling
- other.

Pests / animals / vectors

- control
- management options or practices
- equipment (eg. spray equipment)
- other.

Housing

- infrastructure (eg. electrical, mould/dampness)
- other.

Community

- infrastructure (eg. roads, electricity supply, drinking water supply, gas supply)
- other.

Food safety

- quality (eg. personal hygiene, storage, out of date, vermin, flood damage, underground cooking, transport of food, temperature control, cross contamination, damaged goods)
- quantity (eg. inadequate supply of food)
- other.