



Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Health, Children, Community Services, Aged Care and
Housing

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Our Ref: ADF/03/10920
Your Ref:

26 January 2007

Chief Executive
All public and private hospitals

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: *Health (Legionella) Regulations 2001* - Routine flushing of outlets of hospital warm water systems

I refer to an application dated 21 December 2006 from Mr John Dransfield, National President, Institute of Hospital Engineering, Australia requesting that consideration be given to the approval of the Secretary to the Department of Human Services under regulation 24 of the *Health (Legionella) Regulations 2001* of a method of maintaining hospital warm water systems that is different to the method specified in regulation 20 of the *Health (Legionella) Regulations 2001*.

The above application was made in the light of current severe potable water shortages and water restrictions in Victoria, and the lack of recent evidence linking warm water systems to notifications of Legionnaires' disease.

Regulation 5 of the *Health (Legionella) Regulations 2001* defines a warm water system as a piped water system, including any thermostatic mixing valve, which is designed to supply water at between 30°C and 60°C. Regulation 20 provides that all warm water system outlets that have not been in use for 7 days or more be flushed at full flow sufficient to remove all stagnant water leading to the outlet, and until the temperature at which the system is set is reached at the outlet.

In accordance with the instrument of delegation of the Secretary to the Department dated 21 February 2006, the following method has been approved for all hospital warm water systems in lieu of the method specified in regulation 20.

Please note that this approval is an interim measure pending further consultation with stakeholders and, unless otherwise advised, will lapse on 1 March 2009.

All warm water systems:

1. Consideration be given to removing unnecessary or infrequently used showers and taps. If these fittings are removed, the redundant supply pipe work be cut back as far as possible to the common supply, for example, to the recirculating pipe work or the pipe work supplying a more frequently used upstream fitting.

Warm water systems in higher risk areas as determined by the hospital, which may include oncology, intensive care and aged care facilities:

2. All warm water system outlets that have not been in use for 7 days or more be flushed at full flow in accordance with regulation 20. The period of flushing be sufficient to remove all stagnant water leading to the outlet, and until the temperature at which the system is set is reached at the outlet.

Warm water systems in areas other than the above higher risk areas:

3. All shower outlets in these areas that have not been in use for 7 days or more be flushed prior to reuse. The practice of running the water of the shower for the purpose of testing the temperature of the water prior to the immersion of the patient is considered to constitute a flush of the system prior to reuse.
4. Tap outlets in these areas that have not been in use for 7 days or more need not be flushed prior to reuse.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- (i) the approval may lapse at the discretion of the Secretary;
- (ii) the approval may lapse where it can be demonstrated that any warm water system poses a risk to public health; and
- (iii) notwithstanding sub-regulation 24(5), the responsible person must comply with all other relevant requirements of the regulations.

Would you please provide copies of this letter to your Infection Control and Engineering Departments.

Should you wish to discuss the above or any related matter, please telephone Stuart Adcock or Christy Boucher at the Legionella Section on 1800 248 898.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Bowman
Assistant Director
Environmental Health

Cc: Mr John Dransfield, National President, IHEA