



Department of
Health

Environmental Health Directorate Strategic Plan 2024–2027



health.wa.gov.au





This resource was prepared by:

Environmental Health Directorate
Public and Aboriginal Health Division
Department of Health of Western Australia
ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au
health.wa.gov.au

Disclaimer

All information and content in this material is provided in good faith by the WA Department of Health and is based on sources believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of development. The State of Western Australia, the WA Department of Health and their respective officers, employees and agents do not accept legal liability or responsibility for the material, or any consequences arising from its use.

Feedback

Any feedback related to this plan should be emailed to ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgment of Country

WA Health acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. It acknowledges the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today.



Table of contents

Message from the Chief Health Officer	2	Our outcomes	9
Message from the Executive Director Environmental Health	2	Outcome 1: Safe food and water	10
Strategy snapshot	3	Outcome 2: Minimised hazards in the community	12
What is Environmental Health?	4	Outcome 3: Improved environmental health conditions in remote Aboriginal communities	14
Who we are	6	Outcome 4: Managed environmental health risks of emergencies, incidents and emerging issues	15
Our structure	7	Outcome 5: Continuous improvement of environmental health service delivery	16
Our strategic directions	8	Strategic alignment	18
Lead and innovate	8	Partnerships	19
Steward and assure	8	Reporting and monitoring	21
Protect and enable	8	Enabling legislation	22
Inspire and empower	8		



Message from the Chief Health Officer

The role of public health in Western Australia is to preserve, promote and protect peoples' health. We strive to deliver appropriate services and programs and regard the identification of strategic opportunities and challenges as an essential planning and preparedness mechanism.

We also face unprecedented climatic changes resulting in more frequent emergency events including floods, cyclones, and bushfires. We continue to plan and prepare for these emergencies with a focus on how health may be impacted by changes in food, water supplies and air quality.

A key opportunity remains in the implementation of stage 5 of the Public Health Act together with modernised regulations which will continue to support the management of environmental health hazards.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the sustained high level of protection and safety that is provided for our community by the Environmental Health Directorate in partnership with environmental health professionals across WA.

I am very pleased to endorse and support the outcomes in this strategy and oversee its implementation during 2024 to 2027.

Dr Andrew Robertson

**Chief Health Officer
Public and Aboriginal Health Division
Department of Health WA**



Message from the Executive Director Environmental Health

Environmental Health is the cornerstone of our collective wellbeing. It encompasses the intricate interplay between the natural and human-made environment and public health, recognising that our surroundings profoundly impact our physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

This strategic plan outlines a comprehensive framework for the directorate which aims to protect and promote the health of Western Australians. It recognises and addresses the challenges we face in safeguarding the environmental health of our communities.

Through this plan we will prioritise the protection of food and water, minimise environmental health hazards in the community – including remote Aboriginal communities, manage environmental health risks from emergencies, incidents and emerging risks, and ensure continuous improvement of the delivery of our services.

We will work collaboratively with stakeholders and industries to foster a culture of environmental health stewardship. By embracing this strategic plan we can create a healthier and more resilient future for all Western Australians.

I am pleased to support and advocate for the environmental health outcomes outlined in this strategy.

Dr Michael Lindsay

**Executive Director
Environmental Health Directorate
Department of Health WA**



Strategy snapshot

Our Vision	Our values	Our goals
Working together to protect, promote and improve the health and wellbeing of Western Australians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purposeful • caring • collaborative • open • outcome focused. 	Protect our community and prevent disease, illness and injury caused by environmental health hazards.
Our strategic directions Lead and innovate Protect and enable Steward and assure Inspire and empower		
Our objectives	Our outcomes	
Safe food and water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food that is safe and suitable to eat • water that is safe to use. 	
Minimised hazards in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise exposure to mosquito-borne diseases and insects of public health significance • minimise hazards associated with beauty therapy and personal appearance • reduced exposure to hazardous substances • safe public events, buildings, and homes. 	
Improved environmental health conditions in remote Aboriginal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health hazards are minimised in remote Aboriginal communities. 	
Managed emerging environmental health risks during emergencies and incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen preparedness for environmental health emergency response and recovery • prepare for environmental health impacts of climate change. 	
Continuous improvement of environmental health service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a robust environmental health regulatory review process • strengthen engagement, partnerships, and environmental health profile with our stakeholders • a strong workforce • enhanced business intelligence, data analysis and reporting. 	



What is environmental health?

Environmental health aims to protect our health from hazards in the environment.

The air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat are all part of our environment and can have a direct impact on our health.

As we live, work, and play we may be exposed to biological, chemical, and physical hazards in both indoor and outdoor environments. Different exposures may be linked to diseases, illness, injury, disability, physical and mental health conditions and premature death.

Environmental health professionals aim to protect people from these health hazards and activities in non-workplace environments.

Why is environmental health essential to the community?

Western Australia has a high standard of environmental health compared with other countries. Our beaches are clean and safe for swimming, we can safely eat our food and drink our water and the air we breathe is clean.

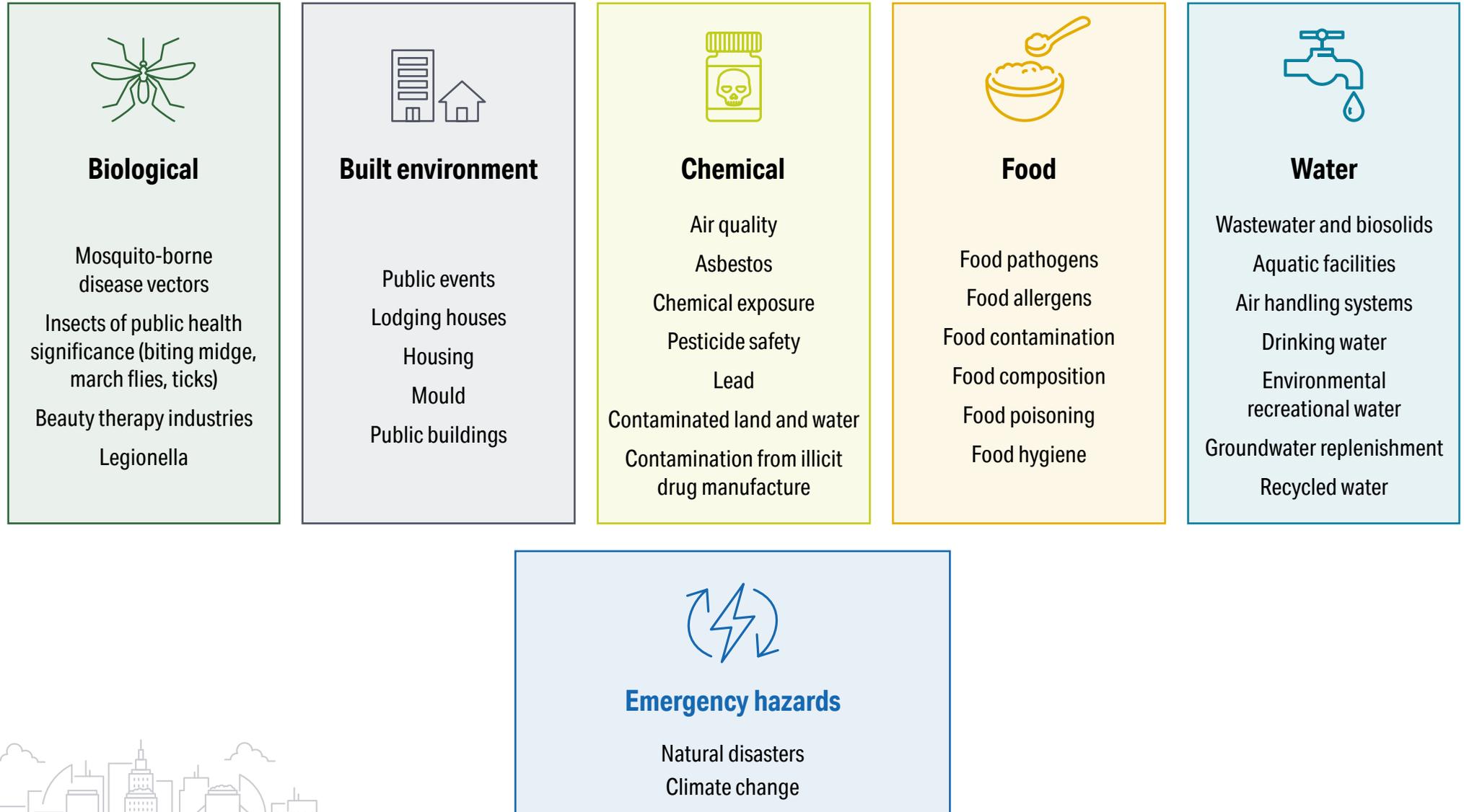
Western Australians have benefited from long-standing public and environmental health services managed by the Department of Health and local governments across WA since the introduction of the original Health Act in 1911. The successful implementation of environmental health services over the past century has helped to prevent, reduce or even eliminate the prevalence of many diseases, illness and injury across WA.

It is essential that state and local governments continue to invest in and manage environmental health services which play a critical role in preventative health and contribute to reducing the burden on clinical health services.



Features of the environmental health landscape

Environmental health hazards to Western Australian's include:





Who we are

The Environmental Health Directorate has a crucial role in managing environmental health matters at a statewide level. We deliver a diverse range of activities, including the administration of 5 Acts and 26 subsidiary regulations. As a trusted regulator, community educator and capacity builder, we work together with state and local governments and industry to protect the health and safety of the WA community.

Our vision

Working together to protect, promote and improve the health and wellbeing of Western Australians.¹

Our goal

Protect our community and prevent disease, illness and injury caused by environmental health hazards.

Our values



Purposeful



Caring



Collaborative



Open



Outcome-focused

¹ Western Australian State Public Health Plan 2019 - 2024



Our structure

The Environmental Health Directorate includes 6 program areas that support the Executive Director to deliver environmental health services.

Executive Director



System performance

Emergency response and management, pesticide and food licensing, development assessments, pesticide compliance, local government response, customer service, system and executive support, workforce planning and capability, surveillance and business intelligence



Science and policy

Legislation and regulatory reform, Aboriginal environmental health, public health assessments, stakeholder engagement



Biological and applied EH hazards

Mosquito management, invertebrate and arbovirus surveillance programs, events, personal appearances, mould, public buildings and legionella



Chemical hazards

Air quality, land and water contamination, asbestos, pesticide safety, illicit drug contamination, chemical exposure



Food

Food policy and standards, management of chemical, microbiological, physical and dietary food risks, food incident management, food recalls



Water

Drinking water, aquatic facilities, environmental waters, wastewater, recycled water, biosolids, air handling and ground water replenishment and subdivision assessment

Our strategic directions

The Environmental Health Directorate works towards achieving our desired outcomes by completing activities that align with four key strategic directions:

Lead and innovate

- Use best available research and evidence to conduct risk assessments of environmental health hazards to inform management decisions
- Manage the design and use of equipment and technology to improve service delivery and regulatory approach
- Conduct monitoring and surveillance activities to identify emerging issues and gather data on environmental health outcomes
- Raise the profile of Environmental Health

Protect and enable

- Develop and manage environmental health risk management measures including policies, legislation, and guidelines
- Conduct regulatory compliance activities for meat, dairy, bivalve mollusc businesses, public hospitals, food businesses not in a local government, aquatic facilities, recreational waters and the pesticide industry
- Coordinate investigations with stakeholders as required
- Provide evidence based information on environmental health risks to decision makers



Steward and assure

- Provide guidance to and build capacity of stakeholders on environmental health matters
- Provide support for agencies involved with emergency response, recovery and emerging issues requiring environmental health input
- Contribute to development and implementation of national policy, standards and other initiatives
- Participate in government, business and community forums, committees and working groups related to environmental health matters
- Conduct monitoring and reporting activities

Inspire and empower

- Coordinate sharing of information, discussion and collective decision making with stakeholders in response to environmental health issues
- Undertake workforce planning to support an adaptive and flexible resilient workforce
- Progress initiatives that support a healthy workplace culture
- Conduct education and promotion activities related to environmental health outcomes
- Ensure regular communication and information exchange between stakeholders



Our outcomes





Safe food

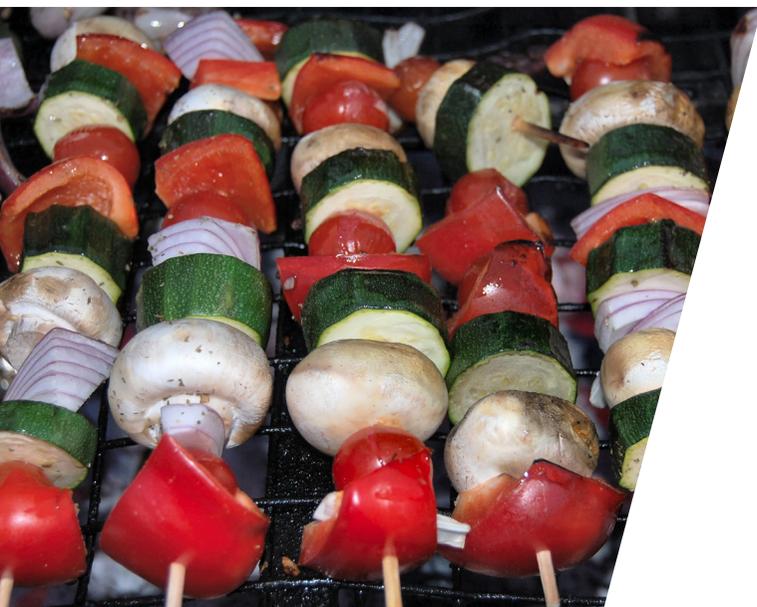
Food that is safe and suitable to eat

The WA population relies on a diverse food supply chain that includes food production, processing food, transporting food, preparing food and consuming food.

Our promotion of food safety awareness and education initiatives aim to improve food safety culture across the community to minimise the risk of foodborne illness.

Indicators

- meet the target of the WA Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2023-26 (20 per cent decrease over 3 years in campylobacteriosis rates)
- notifications of reportable food pathogens (*Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella* spp, *Shigella* spp, verotoxigenic E.coli)
- coordination of food recalls within appropriate time frames
- verified food safety programs
- food safety assessments undertaken
- *Food Act 2008* reporting completed and published
- submissions on Food Standards assessments and proposals
- assessment of Regulatory Food Safety Auditor (RFSA) applications.





Safe water

Water that is safe to drink and use

It is essential that public health is protected by managing water related hazards that could cause illness and injury. We oversee all water use in WA. This includes ensuring the provision of safe drinking water and adequate management of waste water, recycled water, aquatic facilities and recreational waters.

Indicators

- rates of water borne illness
- number of non-compliant water samples.



2

Minimised hazards in the community

Minimise exposure to mosquito-borne diseases and insects of public health significance

We undertake activities to reduce the risk of exposure to diseases transmitted by mosquitoes or exposure to other biting insects (e.g. March flies, biting midges, ticks).

Minimise hazards associated with beauty therapy and personal appearance

We undertake activities to reduce the risk of exposure to diseases acquired through beauty therapy and personal appearance industries (e.g. tattooing, body piercing businesses).

Reduced exposure to hazardous substances

Hazardous substances such as asbestos, chemicals, pesticides and mould have the potential to be harmful to human health. They can remain in the environment for a long time and are suspected of contributing to a wide range of health concerns from asthma to cancer.

We make sure appropriate precautions are in place for specific industries and the public to reduce exposure to hazardous substances that may be present in the community and monitor emerging risks to ensure the community is protected from any undue harm.



2

Safe public events, buildings, and homes

Our community has placed increased importance on public events to enhance social connectedness and stimulate economic growth. The varied nature and scale of public events requires prior consideration of environmental health risks including crowd safety and safe structures to protect public health.

There are also various health risks that need to be managed within our built environment including public buildings (such as entertainment centres and theatres), accommodation premises and even in our homes.

Indicators

- annual rate and 5 year moving average rate per 100,000 population for Barmah Forest virus, and Ross River virus
- case notifications for Murray Valley encephalitis and West Nile virus (kunjing subtype) disease
- verified complaints about air quality, pesticide and asbestos issues
- verified complaints about poor remediation practices of premises related to illicit drug use and manufacture
- verified reports of issues associated with public events, buildings, accommodation premises and homes.



3

Improved environmental health conditions in remote Aboriginal communities

The environments in which Aboriginal people live have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Initiatives in remote and regional Aboriginal communities give attention to healthy homes and communities, healthy policies, and support for a skilled and competent Aboriginal environmental health workforce.

Indicators

- amount of skill-based training requested by and provided to Aboriginal environmental health practitioners
- remote Aboriginal communities supported by environmental health workforce and programs.



4

Managed emerging environmental health risks during emergencies and incidents

Strengthen preparedness for environmental health emergency response and recovery

Emergency responses to cyclones, bushfires, floods, chemical spills and building fires have had significant environmental health impacts on WA communities, highlighting the need for effective emergency management. Hazards include contaminated water sources, airborne pollutants from burning debris, toxic chemicals released into the environment, asbestos particulates, mould and the spread of disease-carrying vectors. Effective public health responses require coordinated efforts by public health officials, emergency responders and community organisations to address the risks associated with these hazards.

Prepare for environmental health impacts of climate change

As the impacts of a changing climate become more prominent it poses increased environmental health challenges, such as increased vector-borne diseases, threats to food and water security and extreme weather events. By being better prepared for these impacts we can safeguard public health, ensure resilience and enable timely response to emerging environmental health threats arising from climate change.

Indicators

- environmental health hazards managed during response and recovery phases for emergencies and emerging issues
- deployments to emergency impacted areas
- impacts of climate change on environmental health hazards are identified and plan to mitigate impacts is completed
- incorporation of climate change considerations into strategic and operational planning documents.



5

Continuous improvement of environmental health service delivery

A robust environmental health regulatory review process

A robust environmental health regulatory review program ensures effective enforcement tools are readily available to state and local governments and enables appropriate implementation of the legislation. By conducting regular reviews of existing regulations, policies, and guidelines, the Environmental Health Directorate can identify areas for improvement and emerging environmental health issues, update outdated requirements and align with evolving best practices.

Strengthen engagement, partnerships, and environmental health profile with our stakeholders

Raising the profile of environmental health is crucial for increasing understanding and engagement. By actively involving stakeholders such as local governments, environmental health professionals, industry, associations, other government agencies and non-governmental organisations, we can build trust, foster partnerships and promote shared ownership of environmental health initiatives.

Effective communication ensures sound community understanding of how environmental health hazards and risks are managed to protect health. Stakeholder engagement activities identify key stakeholders, messages and strategies to achieve communication objectives.



5

A strong environmental health workforce

The workforce faces a shortage of skilled professionals that imposes a significant obstacle for effective public health protection. Identification and implementation of strategies to build and maintain a strong, capable and resilient workforce is required.

Enhanced business intelligence, data analysis and reporting

We continue to build business intelligence activities and capabilities to collect, store and analyse data to help inform monitoring and surveillance of environmental health risks, licensing and registration processes and other regulatory activities.

Indicators

- completion of stage 5 *Public Health Act 2016* and associated regulations
- legislation, policies and guidelines are reviewed as prescribed
- environmental health is recognised as a key public health function in protecting health
- informed and engaged stakeholders that provide regular feedback on functions and services
- resilient skilled environmental health workforce
- educated community with access to appropriate information
- successful capture and analysis of environmental health data



Strategic alignment

The outcomes and strategies described in this plan align with national and state planning and review activities.

We report annually on our activities that align with the objectives and key priorities described in the:

- Public and Aboriginal Health Division Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023
- WA State Public Health Plan 2019 – 2024
- WA Sustainable Health Review including
 - Enduring Strategy 1 – commit and collaborate to address major public health issues
 - Enduring Strategy 6 – invest in digital healthcare and use data wisely
 - Enduring Strategy 7 – culture and workforce to support new models of care
 - Enduring Strategy 8 – innovate for sustainability
- Environmental Health Standing Committee Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023



Partnerships

Environmental health risks are managed by an array of complementary national, state and territory agencies, and local governments, all of whom contribute to a national system of health protection. Partnerships and collaborations are necessary for maximising outcomes and minimising duplication of effort to benefit all Western Australians. It is imperative that collaboration exists at the local, state, and national level, as well as with respective industry groups, associations and the public.

Our teams engage with members of the public and the following stakeholders in accordance with our [customer service and stakeholder engagement charter](#).

National	State		WA health system	Local
Department of Health and Aged Care	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions	Minister for Health	137 local governments
Environmental Health Standing Committee on Health	Department of Finance	Department of Communities	Director General	WA Principal Environmental Health Officers Group
Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority	Department of Treasury	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage	Deputy Director General	Great Southern Regional Group
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency	Public Sector Commission	Department of Education	Chief Health Officer	Southwest Regional Group
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Mental Health Commission	WA Police Force	Public and Aboriginal Health Division	Mid-West Regional Group
Food Standards Australia New Zealand	Department of Transport	Department of Training and Workforce Development	Legal Services	Central West Regional Group
National Health and Medical Research Council	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	Purchasing and System Performance Division	North-West Regional Group
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (Worksafe)	The Commission for Occupational Safety and Health	Strategy and Governance Division	
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	Small Business Development Corporation	Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation	North Metropolitan Health Service	
Climate Change Authority	Department of Justice	Environmental Protection Authority	South Metropolitan Health Service	
National Arbovirus and Malaria Advisory Committee	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	East Metropolitan Health Service	
Food Regulation Standing Committee	ChemCentre	PathWest	WA Country Health Services	
			Local Health Authorities Analytical Committee	
			Public hospitals	
			WA Professional Review Board	

Agencies	Associations	Non-government organisations	Industry	Educational institutions
Water Corporation	WA Local Government Association	Standards Australia	Land developers	Curtin University of Technology
Rottneest Island Authority	Local Government Professionals	Cancer Council	Meat, dairy and seafood industry	Edith Cowan University
Kings Park Board	Environmental Health Association	Heart foundation	Pesticide industry	Murdoch University
Lotterywest	Public Health Association	Bega Garnbirringu Health Service	Licensed water service providers	The University of Western Australia
ChemCentre	Public Health Advocacy Institute	Ngaanyatjarra Health Service	Private hospitals	North Metropolitan TAFE
Tourism WA	Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology	Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation	Consultants	South Metropolitan TAFE
Aqwest	Mosquito Control Association of Australia	Menzies Aboriginal Corporation	Registered Training Organisations	Central Regional TAFE
Busselton Water	Australian College of Toxicology and Risk Assessment	Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service	Ports	North Regional TAFE
VenuesWest	Australian Water Association	Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation	Mine sites	
Plumbers Licensing Board	Water Research Australia	Looma Community Inc	Small drinking water service providers	
Main Roads WA	Water Services Association Australia	Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service	Small wastewater providers	
Economic Regulation Authority	Event Industry Association	Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation	Laboratories	
WA Planning Commission	Chamber of Minerals and Energy	Ngangganawili Aboriginal Health Service	Aquatic facilities operators, engineers, installers, and manufacturers	
Western Australian Meat Industry Authority	Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air conditioning and Heating	Yulella Aboriginal Corporation	Water treatment product manufacturers	
	Swimming pool and spa association	Mawarnkarra Health Service		
	Royal Life Saving Society	Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation		
	WA Law society			



Reporting and monitoring

Annual review

This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the WA community and our stakeholders and to monitor progress in achieving the identified outcomes.

Surveillance and reporting

To support the implementation of the plan, individual program areas are responsible for identifying actions that support meeting each outcome and are required to report progress at regular intervals. Program areas are also required to monitor and initiate a response to emerging evidence for new environmental health risks of concern to WA.

We regularly collect and analyse a range of environmental health activity data that aligns with the specified outcomes of this plan, including:

- licensing and registration for specific industries
- compliance, enforcement, and complaints investigations for specific industries
- statewide food and water quality monitoring
- statewide disease notifications and outbreak investigations
- statewide food incidents and food recalls
- statewide arbovirus surveillance
- statewide reports from local governments on their performance of functions under the *Food Act 2008* and *Public Health Act 2016*.

This data is published each year in the [Environmental Health Directorate Yearbook](#) which showcases the many roles, responsibilities and achievements of the directorate.

High level indicator reporting

The directorate is committed to developing environmental health indicators for WA to monitor progress towards meeting our strategic outcomes. We aim to deliver an indicator framework that describes the activities of both state and local governments, which may include the development of a:

- public dashboard for the community on environmental health indicators relevant to the activities of the Environmental Health Directorate
- dashboard of environmental health outcomes reported at a local government level.

Operational planning

Each team in the Environmental Health Directorate completes and implements activities outlined in team annual financial year operational plans.

These describe how each team's key projects and activities align with the outcomes in this strategic plan, together with key priorities for the Department of Health.



Enabling legislation

We are required to manage the review and development of Acts and regulations.

Public Health Act 2016

Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911

Built environment

1. *Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992*
2. *Construction Camp Regulations*
3. *Health (Construction Work) Regulations 1973*
4. *Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007*
5. *Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992*
6. *Health (Temporary Sanitary Conveniences) Regulations 1997*
7. *Health Act (Carbon Monoxide) Regulations 1975*
8. *Health Act (Laundries and Bathrooms) Regulations*
9. *Health (Garden Soil) Regulations 1998*

Body art and personal appearance services

10. *Hairdressing Establishment Regulations 1972*
11. *Health (Skin Penetration Procedure) Regulations 1998*

Pesticide safety

12. *Health (Pesticides) Regulations 2011*

Contaminated sites

13. *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*

Other

14. *Fly Eradication Regulations*
15. *Piggeries Regulations 1952*
16. *Health (Cloth Materials) Regulation 1985*
17. *Health (Offensive Trades Fees) Regulations 1976*
18. *Health (Rottnest Island) By-laws 1989*
19. *Health (Prescribed Insect Pests) Regulations 1991*
20. *Health (Notification of Lead Poisoning) Regulations 1985*
21. *Health (Section 112(2) Prohibition) Regulations 2006*

Food

Food Act 2008

22. *Food Regulations 2009*

Water

Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1966

23. *Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974*
24. *Health Act (Underground Water Supply) Regulations 1959*
25. *Health (Air-handling and Water Systems) Regulations 1994*
26. *Sewerage (Lighting, Ventilation and Construction) Regulations 1971*
27. *Registration, Enforcement and Discharge of Local Authority Charges on Land Regulations*



This document can be made available in alternative formats.

Produced by Environmental Health © Department of Health 2023

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.