

Fact sheet Lake closures



Closing our lakes to keep you safe

Seqwater takes a proactive and conservative approach to managing safety at our recreation areas. Safety at our dams is a key priority and access to water-based activities is restricted where there is a potential public health risk or a public safety risk.

In 2008, the National Health and Medical Research Council released the *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Waters*—developed as a tool to ensure recreational waterways are managed as safely as possible. The guidelines aim to protect human health by providing a framework to assess, manage and reduce the risks associated with recreational waterway use.

Seqwater's water quality monitoring programs for recreational waterways and decision-making criteria for lake closures are based on these guidelines. There are also guidelines associated with the management of blue-green algae from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

When restrictions are in place, Seqwater employees continue to monitor the site and undertake testing as appropriate. Sites cannot be re-opened to water-based activities until test results indicate it is safe to do so.

Impacts of high rainfall on lakes

Rivers, creeks, lakes and other waterways are often affected by pollutants following heavy rainfall. Pathogens such as bacteria, viruses and parasites have an increased likelihood of being transported into waterways. These changes to the water quality can result from a number of sources, including stormwater runoff, sewage overflows and discharges, farming activities, human effluent and the presence of animals.

In addition, high rainfall events often cause debris and other hazards to be washed into the lake, which can cause a public safety risk to users of our lakes. Further safety concerns relating to the outflow of water over spillways may result in the closure of some lakes.

Potential health risks

Exposure to pathogens in waterways can occur through direct contact with polluted water during recreation, accidental ingestion of polluted water or the inhalation of small water droplets.

Polluted water has the potential to cause a variety of gastrointestinal diseases collectively known as gastroenteritis. Symptoms of gastroenteritis may include vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach-ache, nausea and headaches. Diseases and conditions affecting the eyes, ears, skin and the upper respiratory tract can also be contracted when certain pathogens come into contact with broken skin or the delicate membranes in the ear, nose and lungs.

Health risks associated with high levels of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) can include headaches, nausea, muscular pains, diarrhoea and gastroenteritis.

Communicating the closures

When a lake is closed to water-based activities, signage will be erected on site. There will also be regular updates on the Seqwater website, our facebook and twitter pages.

For more information visit us at:

w www.seqwater.com.au

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