



## Project Summary: Consultation on community water use and risk awareness

*The National Health and Medical Research Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their continuing cultural and spiritual connection to water, land and community.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge the importance of listening to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and learning from their experiences and knowledge.*

### Project Overview

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is updating the [Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water \(2008\)](#) (the Guidelines).

NHMRC invites Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide input on the updated Guidelines. We want to improve the way we consult with communities that are impacted by our guidelines. We also want to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard during the guideline development process and contribute to improving public health outcomes.

### About NHMRC

NHMRC is the nation's leading expert body in health and medical research, and part of the Australian Government. NHMRC aims to raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia. This includes funding research and supporting the development of consistent health standards across the states and territories.

For more information, please visit the NHMRC website: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>.

### About the Water Team

The Water Team is part of the Public Health section of NHMRC. It is responsible for national water quality guidance about human health. The Water Team is small and works together virtually from locations including Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. The Water Team receives advice from the [Recreational Water Quality Advisory Committee](#), which provides expertise on water science, managing risk, and public health issues related to water quality.

## About the Guidelines

The Guidelines are intended for site managers, local councils and regulators who monitor and manage water sites in Australia. These groups implement the Guidelines according to the local regulations and requirements of each state and territory.

The updated Guidelines will provide guidance on how to plan for and manage health risks from water bodies. These risks occur through direct or indirect contact with salt water and fresh water during activities such as fishing, boating or swimming. It also includes cultural and spiritual practices that involve contact with water bodies.

The updated Guidelines will include information that can be used for working out whether a water body is safe to use (e.g. safe levels of chemicals, algae and microbes). Local authorities and site managers can use the Guidelines to determine if further action is needed to protect the community. For example, if the levels of chemicals are higher than the guideline values (and depending on the needs of the community), site managers may:

- investigate further and seek advice from health authorities
- alert the community of potential risks and provide advice for safe use
- restrict access to a site to keep the community protected until it is safe for use.

The updated Guidelines will not include advice on physical risks such as drowning or animal attacks. They also will not include advice on drinking water quality, treated water such as swimming pools or risks from eating food caught or collected from salt or fresh water.

## About the Consultation

The Water Team will invite feedback on:

- community values, preferences and priorities about local water use
- unintended impacts on communities of draft guidelines
- how to manage and communicate risks.

There will be several stages in 2022 and 2023 to provide feedback. Feedback will be collected by email or online surveys. If needed, we can arrange other means of consultation such as Zoom or telephone, within our resources.

The Recreational Water Quality Advisory Committee will consider issues raised during this process. Feedback will be published in a Consultation Report where permission has been given to do so.

For further information, please contact: [water@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:water@nhmrc.gov.au)