

# Campfire Summer Edition 2018

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## Introduction



Welcome to another edition of campfire, the Department of Health's newsletter for all Aboriginal Environmental Health practitioners.

As 2018 ends, it is a good time to pause and reflect on the year we have all had.

Much has happened this year, so it's important for all of us, even in our busy lives to stop and take a breath and acknowledge the past events. As you recharge over the December / January holiday period just remember *a day without sunshine is like, you know, night.*



Okay I know it was a poor attempt at humour, but why the long face!

## Christmas & New Year Wishes



On behalf of the EHD team, we wish one and all, a safe and happy time over Christmas. May you enjoy your time off with family and friends and we look forward to working with you all again in 2019.

## Aboriginal Environmental Health Regional Forums

Planned meetings of the various regional sub committees in 2019 are as follows:

### Mid-West (Geraldton)

5 February  
6 August

### Pilbara (Tom Price)

6-8 February

### Goldfields (Kalgoorlie)

21 February  
16 May  
20 September (Conference)  
21 November

### Kimberley (Broome)

TBA

Please reserve the dates.

## On-Line Activity Database



Unfortunately, the recording of activities on the On-Line activity database is a problem. Very few Service Providers have a regular and consistent practice of entering data.

The problems we repeatedly find include:

- Several activities recorded are invalid (outside of what is permitted under the contract)
- Incorrect time allocations. Sometimes we see more time recorded than what one person can possibly do in a week.
- Use of the “Unknown” for community name
- Misunderstanding of what constitutes “travel”
- Activity Description is poor
- The same data entries are used / recorded week in week out.

We raise this issue at every regional Forum and when we speak to service provider staff but the message does not appear to be getting through. **The data is important.**

Do you know why EHD is interested in collecting the information? Besides confirming what each Service Provider does, the aggregated data informs and demonstrates trends in the program.

The data entered is our first line of defence when justifying the program and your contract. For example, demonstrating to the Minister for Health and Treasury what, where,

when, how we are doing EH and the value the program provides and achieves.

## Mosquitos



Throughout this edition of *Campfire*, we have included copies of the “Fight the Bite” posters promoting safe healthy living practices and how to protect yourself and family members from the dreaded mosquito. The messages of protection are for everyone, so pay particular attention to the young. See <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Health-for/Licensing-and-industry/Environmental-hazards> for more information

**Basic Plumbing Repairs** – The Plumbers Licensing and Plumbing Standards Regulations 2000 were amended in January 2017 to allow a specified range of basic emergency plumbing repairs to be carried out by trained Environmental Health Workers in prescribed remote Western Australian Aboriginal communities.

The minimum level of training required by an authorised worker to undertake these minor repairs is a Certificate II in Population Health or Indigenous Environmental Health.

The new arrangements enable urgent basic plumbing repairs, such as:

- Replacing leaking tap washers, spindles, handles and shower roses;
- Replacing “P” and “S” traps in readily accessible locations (such as under sinks, basins and troughs);
- Replacing leaking hose taps and hose tap vacuum breakers;
- Replacing leaking cistern inlet and outlet washers and valves;
- Capping a burst water main, damaged waste pipe or sanitary drain;
- Replacing general covers (missing or broken inspection mounds, gully mounds, grates and vent cowl); and
- Clearing by the use of plungers, flexible hand rods or hand-held water hoses blocked waste pipes and drains, and unblocking toilets, showers, basins, troughs, sinks and baths.

For remote Aboriginal communities that are located some considerable distance from the nearest licensed plumbing contractor, the delay in accessing a plumber to do simple urgent repairs increases the risk to public health. The scheme will assist in improving living conditions in remote communities by reducing the risk of hygiene-related health issues that can arise if plumbing emergencies are left unattended for prolonged periods of time.

Employers of Environmental Health Workers who carry out work under the scheme are required to record all plumbing repairs carried out for auditing purposes.



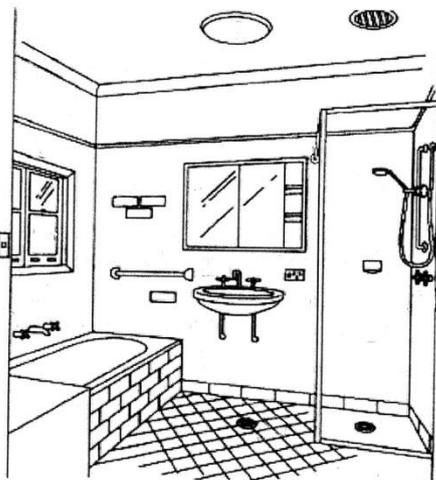
A review of the regulations was expected 12 months after their introduction, however, the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety has delayed the Review until late 2019.



## Community Environmental Health Action Plan (CEHAPS)

A CEHAP is an important tool in developing an annual program of EH related activities for each community serviced. Its contents include information to help an EHP undertake his/her tasks efficiently and effectively. A simple survey undertaken recently by Scott McKenzie (PHAIWA) appears to show that many Service Providers' staff have a training need in negotiating and developing a CEHAP. Therefore, we will help each Service Provider develop the skills to prepare their own CEHAPs

## Safe Bathroom Checklist



It is very pleasing to receive copies of the safe bathroom checks regularly from some of our Service Providers. However, it's disappointing when we discover in conversation that other Service Providers either are not getting into the homes or when they do they fail to forward the completed sheets to EHD.

Please scan and email copies of the SBCs to [AboriginalEnvironmentalHealthWA@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:AboriginalEnvironmentalHealthWA@health.wa.gov.au) . The information you provide helps

to establish if bathrooms are being maintained, healthy living practices are possible and if they are contributing to lowering rates of presentations at clinics and hospitals for hygiene related infections.

### Housing Maintenance

Is the condition of the light switch in the following photo dangerous? Whom do you inform? How soon will it be fixed? The obvious answer is it's very dangerous and is a priority. This is not unusual as AEH practitioners are confronted with similar experiences from time to time. Housing has informed us that they are very keen that any instances of poorly maintained housing are reported on its telephone Hotline. Further information on how to do this available from EHD.



What is the chance of hot water in the house below?



Classic installation of a solar hot water system under the shade of a tree!

### **2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference**

WA will host the 2019 National Conference at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Adelaide Terrace, Perth the week of Monday 16 September. A WA local organising group is assisting the Conference Convenor with planning and coordinating the Conference. The conference theme and artwork have been selected for promotional purposes. As more information is available, it will be circularised via email in January. We are expecting a large WA presence at the conference so:-

- mark it in your diaries
- start the process of thinking about what presentation you might do to show the best parts of your program
- start the conversation with your management team for attendance

### **Dog Health Training Course**

After the dog health-training course conducted in Warburton in September 2018, the Directorate met with Murdoch University to review the future of the course.



*(Prof. Ian Robertson, demonstrating the technique for restraining a dog)*

The success of the dog health training and the de-sexing programs around the State has had a positive impact on the number of dogs and their condition of health. However, we cannot afford to take it easy because of this success. Consequently, we will endeavour to run another course in the Kimberley in 2019 at a venue and time to be decided.



### **Half-Yearly Reports**

Remember to send us your six monthly reports by the middle of February 2019.

## Towels and Blankets

The Department has an arrangement with Spotless for the supply of donated laundered towels and blankets for distribution to Aboriginal communities. The aim is not merely a charitable act but a strategy to encourage people to have their own towel. Sharing towels is a known cause of passing infection between people. Ending the practice of sharing towels is a good thing and helps reduce the spread of diseases such as Trachoma.



alamy stock photo

For further details or to arrange a collection from Shenton Park contact EHD.

## WA Aboriginal Environmental Health Program Contracts

The Department has commenced the process to procure Environmental Health services in regional and remote Aboriginal communities in the Goldfields, Kimberley, Mid-West and Pilbara. This process could take between 18 and 24 months to complete before new contracts established. Part of this process will include testing the open market. We will update our contractors as this progresses but we strongly encourage existing service providers to review their levels of reporting and other contractual obligations.

The Director General has granted approval to develop a contract term of more than five years.

## Rheumatic Heart Disease

In the middle of 2018, RHD Australia convened a number of regional workshops around the State. **Acute rheumatic fever** is an illness caused by an autoimmune response to a bacterial infection with group A streptococcus, commonly called the strep bacteria. ... The condition can lead to damaged **heart** valves and a permanent heart condition requiring years of follow up care and treatment.

ARF is a preventable condition managed by improving hygiene in the home and getting treatment for sore throats (strep throats) and skin infections.



## Lies and Nonsense

Is it true that Bouyden McKenzie is a gun golfer and can drive or fire a golf ball a long way!



## Movement Around the State

Moana Tane left Ngaanyatjarra Health service in August for the bright lights of Kalgoorlie.

Sonny McKay left Derby and we wish him all the best in Darwin as he continues developing his career in Aboriginal EH.

Troy Hill has returned to Kalgoorlie this time is working as the Coordinator at Bega Garibirringu Health Service.

Kevin Anderson (Shire of Ashburton) has decided to seek greener pastures in the eastern states and leaves Tom Price on the 21 December 2019.



## 2019 Year of the Docker

A science fiction thriller set in Cockburn Central and played out on the big screen in a town near you.

## Work & Social Life Balance

Reading a previous Campfire over a coffee are Julius Barker (Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service), Robert Mullane and Matt Lester (EHD).



*Editorial bias attributed to John Perrett who looks forward to catching up with the various Aboriginal EH teams and partners in 2019.*