

Discoloured water is a change in the appearance or the colour of your water - usually to a brown or yellow colour.

This discolouration is mostly caused by trace elements within the water such as iron and manganese. When these materials enter the water supply system they are in extremely low levels, however they can accumulate in the pipes and when there are changes in flow conditions the water can become discoloured. Discoloured water is safe to drink.

DISCOLOURED WATER

Discoloured water occurs occasionally in all water supply systems. It is most commonly caused when there is a sudden increase or change in direction of water flow through pipes. Changes in supply sources, due to declining aquifer levels and the use of different and deeper bores can also lead to these elements appearing in the drinking water system.

Operational incidents, such as burst water mains, or use of fire hydrants are examples of events that can also cause this discolouration to occur. Harmless deposits of iron and manganese that have accumulated within the water main over a period of time are disturbed and suspended in the water, giving it a discoloured appearance. Although unsightly, the suspended particles are harmless to health and the water is safe to drink.

WHAT CAUSES DISCOLOURED WATER?

Discoloured water is caused by a build-up of deposits that settles in pipes. It may also occur when flows increase due to burst water mains or where operational changes reverse the flows in water mains.

In Narromine Shire a yellow/brown colour and may stain plumbing fixtures and clothing.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I EXPERIENCE DISCOLOURED WATER?

If you experience discoloured water, it is usually only temporary. We advise you to run the garden tap closest to your water meter into a bucket for approximately two minutes to see if it clears. If it doesn't clear, please call Council on 6889 9999 or after hours on the same number.

IS DISCOLOURED WATER SAFE TO DRINK?

Yes. Although unsightly, the suspended particles that cause discoloured water are harmless to health and the water is safe to drink. Council has a comprehensive monitoring and testing program to ensure the safety of the drinking water.

IRON & MANGANESE

Deeper alluvial aquifer systems such as those supplying drinking water to Narromine may often contain deposits of elements such as Iron and Manganese. These elements when mixed with the disinfection agents used to make the water safe to drink can lead to these elements coming out of solution and being visible as discoloured water.

Some nuisance organisms that typically exist in distribution systems can also concentrate manganese in the biofilm that line the pipes. Disturbance of the manganese deposits results in a yellow-brown colour in the water and sometimes an undesirable taste. It may also cause the staining of plumbing fixtures and laundry. Manganese is regarded as a nuisance rather than a toxic component of drinking water. Although unsightly it is harmless to health and the water is safe to drink. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) has an aesthetic guideline of 0.1mg/L for manganese and a health guideline of 0.5mg/L. Iron is also considered a nuisance rather than a toxic element and within the ADWG has an aesthetic guideline of 0.3mg/L with no conclusive health value given.

WHAT CAN I DO IF IT STAINS MY LAUNDRY?

The staining of your laundry from discoloured water is due to particles of sediment lodged in the fabric. The stain usually only becomes permanent if the laundry is allowed to dry. It is therefore essential to keep stained laundry immersed in water and call into Council's Customer Service Centre where Laundry Cleaning Kit containing Citric Acid plus an instruction sheet on its use is available free of charge. Prior to obtaining the kit please keep the effected washing damp. Do not use bleaching agents as they will only fix the stain and make it worse.

WHAT IF I HAVE MILKY OR WHITE COLOURED WATER?

Water that is milky or white in colour is the result of small air bubbles within the water. This is usually caused by air becoming trapped in the pipes after repair work to water mains. This water is harmless and left in a container on the bench, the air will quickly dissipate and the water will become clear.

Council has a comprehensive monitoring and testing program to ensure the safety of the drinking water. Regular water samples are collected and tested from water sources, treatment plants and pipe networks. These tests look at microbiological and chemical levels that can affect customers' health, as well as aesthetic quality levels that can affect the taste and colour of water.