

MESSAGE FROM THE MOUNT ISA WATER BOARD

We recognise the community has a vested interest in Mount Isa's water supply. So here are the facts.

Your water is safe and we are working hard to ensure it continues to meet Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

We've been managing Mount Isa's water supply amid some significant challenges.

We've maintained supply despite a significant blue-green algae bloom in Clear Water Lagoon — potentially the largest ever recorded in a Queensland water supply system.

We sourced an immediate and essential filtration solution in late 2013 as Clear Water Lagoon's natural filtration system had failed.

Reducing the city's water consumption to match the filtration system's capacity is critical. Although we have managed to maintain supply to Australian health guidelines, we still require your vigilance while we implement a more permanent solution.

Our long-term solution will expand our filtration capacity and involves us investing \$9.2 million into new, micro-filtration water treatment infrastructure for the benefit of the Mount Isa community.

Rowena McNally, Chair, Mount Isa Water Board

KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q. Why are there water restrictions when our lakes are almost full?

Even though Mount Isa has recently received good rainfall, our recent water usage has exceeded the capacity of the current filtration system, which was installed in late 2013.

In recent weeks, a significant increase in water usage to higher than average levels has put substantial pressure on the filtration system. At the same time, the capacity of the filtration system has been reduced due to the continued expansion of the blue-green algae bloom and increased matter in the water supply caused by recent rain.

In the short term, to ensure the Mount Isa Water Board can continue to provide safe drinking water, it is necessary to bring water consumption to a level that the current filtration system can manage.

A new, permanent filtration system — which will be introduced in March 2015 and is expected to be fully operational by the end of July 2015 — will increase the amount of water that can be provided to Mount Isa City Council for local use.

Q. Why was a water levy imposed?

The levy is a matter for Mount Isa City Council.

As per the Mount Isa Water Board's contract with Council, the essential major expense associated with implementing the current, temporary filtration system was passed on at cost price. This equipment was essential and urgently sourced to ensure the continued supply of clean water to the Mount Isa community.

As part of negotiations for new, permanent equipment, the Mount Isa Water Board has negotiated with the supplier to secure a substantial reduction in charges effective 1 February 2015 for the current, temporary filtration system. The cost has now reduced from \$250,000 per month to \$10,000 per month, representing a saving to Council of at least \$1.19 million this financial year.



Q. What is being done to meet future water needs?

The Mount Isa Water Board is investing \$9.2 million into new, permanent micro-filtration water treatment infrastructure to expand current filtration capacity. This will increase the amount of water that can be provided to Mount Isa City Council for local use, which should avoid the need for further restrictions, subject to ongoing rainfall.

The new infrastructure will be introduced in March 2015 and is expected to be fully operational by the end of July 2015.

Q. Why do we need a filtration system? What happened to Clear Water Lagoon?

In late 2013, a significant blue-green algae bloom caused Clear Water Lagoon's natural filtration process to fail. This resulted in the lagoon being unable to provide water of an appropriate quality for the Mount Isa community without subsequent filtration.

As there was no likelihood that the algae bloom could be resolved within a suitable timeframe, the Mount Isa Water Board urgently sourced a filtration system as an interim measure to ensure the continued supply of clean water to Mount Isa's community.

The blue-green algae bloom in Clear Water Lagoon has now grown to be potentially the largest ever recorded in a Queensland water supply system.

Levels of blue-green algae have risen to never before seen levels of more than 5.3 million cells per millilitre (as at 9 February 2015). 10,000 cells per millilitre is considered normal and acceptable.

Graph 1: Blue-green algae bloom in Clear Water Lagoon



While investigations are currently being undertaken into the future of Clear Water Lagoon, the Mount Isa Water Board now considers a filtration system essential to future operations. Recent events have demonstrated that Clear Water Lagoon can no longer be relied on to the extent it has been in the past and will not be able to meet the process assurance requirements of modern drinking water standards.

Q. Why can't the blue-green algae be controlled?

There are no sure, cost-effective methods that can be used to effectively and safely control the development of blue-green algae. This is a challenge faced by many water authorities throughout Australia.

Q. How much water does Mount Isa use?

This month, approximately 16.9 mega litres (or 16.9 million litres) of water is being used on average each day in Mount Isa. This equates to approximately 600 litres per person per day.

This water usage is considerably higher than the same time last year. In February 2014, approximately 11.4 mega litres (or 11.4 million litres) of water was used on average in Mount Isa each day. This equates to approximately 400 litres per person per day.

Graph 2 demonstrates how, on certain days over the past two months, water consumption exceeded current filtration capacity.

Graph 2: Average water usage and filtration capacity

