

Becoming an environmental health officer



Department of
Health

Contents

Environmental public health	3
What does an environmental public health professional do?	4
What jobs can I get?	5
Local government	6
State government	10
Study pathways: how do I get into the profession?	12
University pathways to become an environmental health officer	13
Vocational pathways to become an environmental health technician	14
Applying to work in WA with international qualifications	14
Need more information?	15

A career with purpose

For people who want their job to have a meaningful impact.



Environmental public health



What is environmental public health?

Environmental public health is about keeping people safe from hazards in the environment where they live and play. This includes the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the land on which we live.

If our surrounding environment is unhealthy, then our health can also suffer.

This is why we need environmental public health professionals to protect people from micro-organisms, chemicals and physical hazards that can be harmful to our health.

Career opportunities

Environmental public health is a rewarding career where you can help protect community health and wellbeing.

Whether you're at school, university, or just looking for a career change, there are plenty of pathways and opportunities to work in environmental public health.



No two days are the same - one day I'm inspecting food businesses, the next I'm assessing development applications for impacts on public health.

Molly Nadunga, Environmental Health Officer, City of Rockingham



A job in environmental public health can offer:

- fieldwork that takes you out of the office and into the community
- exciting challenges and experiences that make sure every day is different
- opportunities to meet people from all sorts of backgrounds
- employment options in metropolitan, regional and international settings
- flexible work and leave arrangements
- a supportive, close-knit profession with ongoing support and mentoring
- opportunities for a life long and varied career.

What does an environmental public health professional do?

Environmental public health professionals (also known as environmental health officers, public health inspectors, public health officers or authorised officers) are essential to keeping our food, water, land, air, public facilities and events safe. Some of their responsibilities include:

Public health legislation enforcement

Food safety

Safe drinking water

Recreational water safety

Public events safety

Emergency preparedness, response and recovery

Mosquito and vector control

Noise management

Skin penetration and infection control

Environmental health promotion and education

Chemical hazard management

Environmental outbreak investigations and incident response

On-site wastewater management

Monitoring and surveillance of environmental hazards

Healthy and safe homes

Risk communication

Public health assessments of land use planning and development

Aboriginal health



What jobs can I get?

So you want to work in environmental public health – that's the easy bit. Now you need to decide what you want to do.

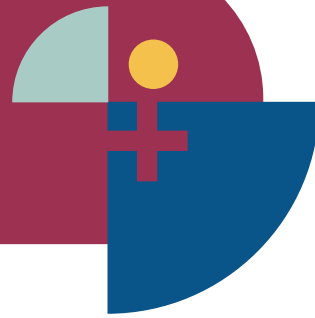
As an environmental public health professional, you could work for:

- local, state or federal government
- private consultancies
- industry and manufacturing companies (e.g. food safety specialist)
- the Australian Defence Force
- mining sector, or
- international agencies.

The profiles over the next few pages cover some of the common environmental public health jobs available in local and state government in Western Australia.



Local government



Environmental health officer

- Entry level salary range from \$80,000 to \$115,000
- Complete a 3-year undergraduate or a postgraduate degree
- Potential to advance career as a coordinator, manager or director

Role description

Environmental health officers have the qualifications that allow them to be authorised under public health legislation to deliver environmental health programs and services.

Local governments are legally required to protect public health – they do this by employing environmental health officers to enforce public health legislation and maintain other public health activities in the local district.

A day in the life of an environmental health officer might involve:



Promoting and enforcing public health laws, guidelines and policies



Conducting an environmental investigation to identify the source of a disease outbreak, food poisoning or pollution event



Assessing and approving risk management plans for community events and public gatherings



Inspecting a restaurant or food manufacturer for food safety



Approving various applications such as on-site wastewater systems



Interpreting the results of water or food sampling to determine if they comply with health standards



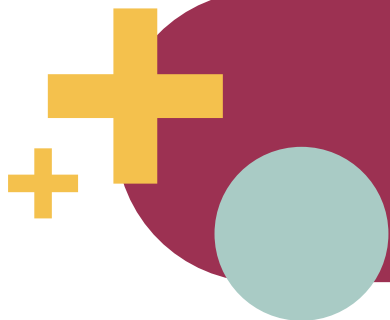
Reviewing land use development plans to make sure public health risks are addressed



Issuing improvement notices, enforcement orders or initiating prosecution for not complying with legislation



Preparing public health risk communication and health promotion messages



Local government

Study requirements

You need to complete an accredited environmental health degree from a recognised university.

Undergraduate degree	3 years full-time study
Postgraduate degree	1-2 years full-time study depending on course

A list of relevant university qualifications can be found on page 13 under university pathways.

Income earning potential

There are many career opportunities from entry level environmental health officer roles, senior environmental health officers, managers, and even opportunities to progress to director, executive director or chief executive officer.

Entry level income earning potential ranges from \$80,000 to \$115,000 dependent on skills, knowledge and experience. Coordinators and managers can receive between \$130,000 to \$150,000, while director roles can make up to \$220,000.

Skills and abilities

To be an environmental health officer, you will need to:

- have an interest in human health and wellbeing
- be able to identify and solve multiple competing tasks
- interpret and enforce legislation
- work well independently and with other people
- be able to talk with community members, business owners and government agencies
- have an interest in educating others about environmental public health risks.

Career progression

There are many career opportunities from entry level environmental health officer roles to senior, coordinator or manager positions.

Local government



Environmental health technician

- Entry level salary range from \$50,000 to \$75,000
- Complete a 1-year diploma (pre-university qualification)
- Potential to advance career as an authorised environmental health officer with further study and receive credit for prior learning

Role description

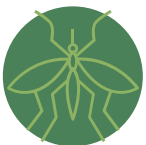
Environmental health technicians provide support to environmental health officers to deliver environmental public health programs and services.

Technicians can undertake duties that do not require authorisation under public health legislation.

A day in the life of a technician might involve:



Collecting food and water samples for microbiological and chemical analysis



Conducting mosquito surveillance, treatment and education



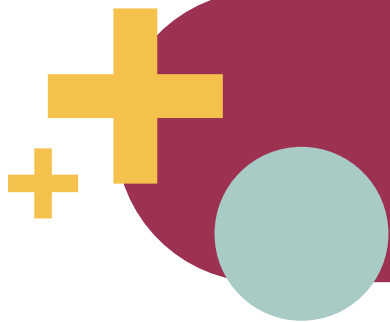
Investigating a community health complaint like food poisoning



Supporting environmental surveillance programs for noise, air, water and land pollution



Assisting with public health inspections of food businesses, skin penetration premises, and on-site sewage management facilities



Local government

Study requirements

You need to complete a diploma in environmental health from a recognised university. The length of training required is 1-year full-time study.

More information can be found on page 14 under vocational pathways.

Income earning potential

Technician salaries range from \$50,000 to \$75,000 dependent on skills, knowledge and experience.

Skills and abilities

To be an environmental health technician, you will need to:

- have an interest in human health and wellbeing
- work well independently and with other people
- be able to talk with community members, business owners and government agencies
- have an interest in educating others about environmental public health risks.

Career progression

If you complete the Diploma of Environmental Health at Edith Cowan University, you can go on to study their Bachelor of Health Science – Environmental Health Major for a further 2 years. Upon completion of this bachelor's degree, you will be eligible for appointment as an environmental health officer.

Many local governments provide study leave opportunities, so you can complete this bachelor's degree while also working as an environmental health technician.

State government



Scientific officer

- Entry level salary range from \$80,000 to \$110,000
- Complete an undergraduate degree in science
- Potential to advance career to senior scientific officer, principal advisor, managing scientist or executive director positions

Role description

Scientific officers are responsible for maintaining environmental health standards across WA. They deliver legislation, guidelines, surveillance, monitoring, and public education throughout WA, and work closely with the local government environmental health workforce, industry and other agencies.

Depending on the team, a day in the life of a scientific officer might involve:



Conducting mosquito trapping in the Kimberley or southwest regions



Conducting food business inspections at Kings Park or Rottnest Island



Coordinating environmental outbreak investigations with local government and other agencies such as algal blooms or wastewater overflows



Assessing applications for an on-site wastewater system or aquatic facility



Assessing public health risks for large scale concerts



Researching and providing advice to the media and other agencies on emerging hazards or chemical incidents



Developing guidelines and educational materials for the public, local government or industry



Reviewing and amending environmental health legislation



Hosting training or webinars to educate stakeholders about enforcing or complying with legislation



State government

Job location

Scientific officers mostly work in the Western Australian Department of Health.

There are other job opportunities in compliance, policy or regulatory roles, both within the Department of Health and across other state government agencies.

Many environmental public health professionals start their careers in local government and then transition across to state government positions.

Study requirements

The scientific officer role involves specialised tasks that require specific knowledge and training.

To work in this role, you will need an undergraduate degree in science that focuses on one or more of the following topics:

- Applied science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Environmental science
- Environmental health
- Food science
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Microbiology
- Physical science
- Water or wastewater management

Undergraduate degrees usually require 3-4 years of full-time study.

Income earning potential

Income earning potential ranges from \$80,000 to \$110,000 dependent on skills, knowledge and experience for entry level positions. Senior scientific officers can earn up to \$150,000.

Skills and abilities

To be a scientific officer, you will need to be able to:

- identify and solve multiple competing tasks
- work well independently and with other people
- read and interpret scientific literature
- conduct research and policy development
- be a good educator
- interpret and enforce public health legislation
- analyse and interpret laboratory results
- talk with community members, industry groups and government agencies.

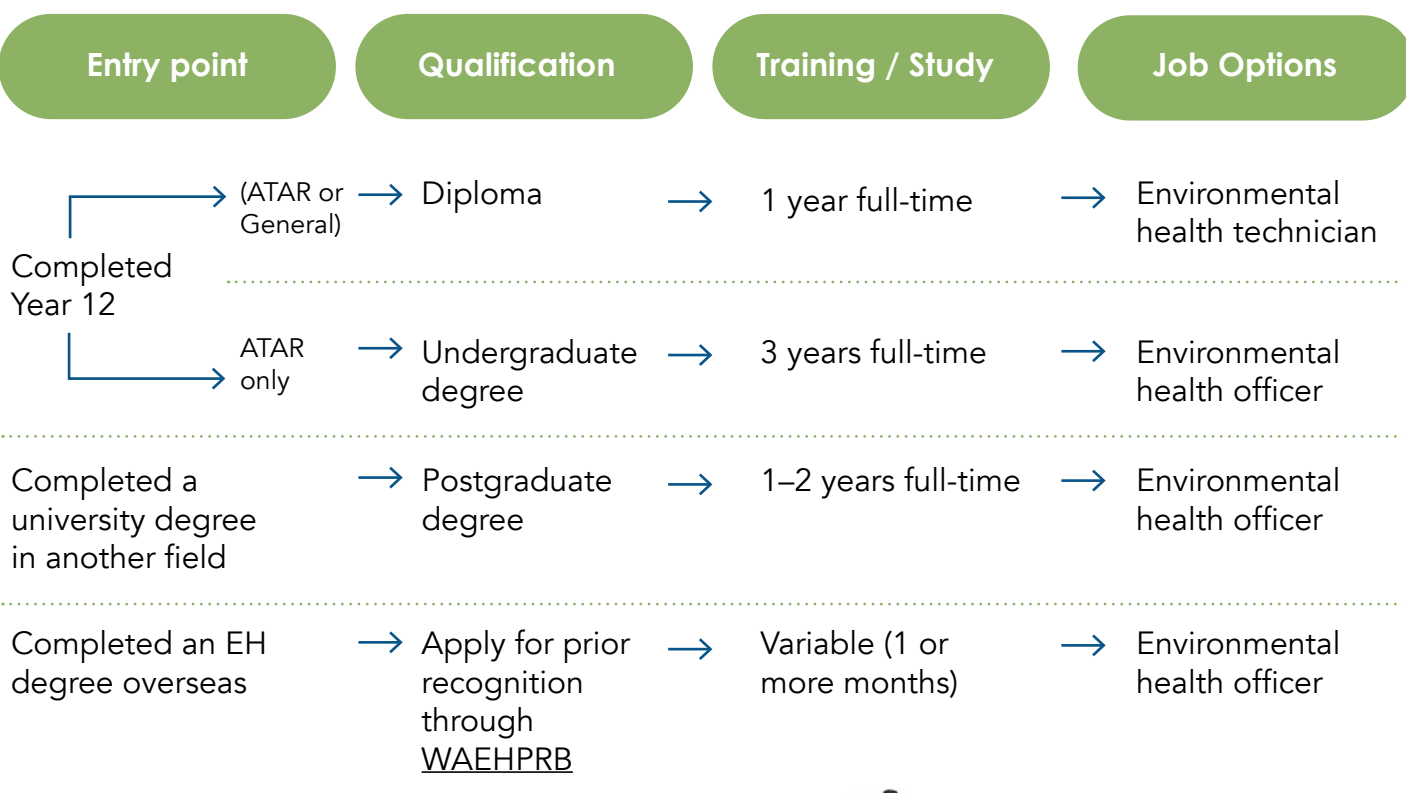
Career progression

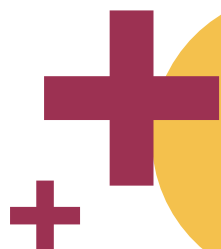
There are many career opportunities from entry level scientific officer roles to senior scientific officer, principal advisor, managing scientist or executive director positions.

Study pathways: how do I get into the profession?

To get a job in environmental public health, the experience and qualifications you need will be different depending on the role. Requirements range from a diploma to a university degree.

There are a number of different pathways you can take to get a job in environmental public health.





University pathways to become an environmental health officer

If you are keen to work as an environmental health officer or take that next step from environmental health technician and complete a degree, you can enroll in a university course. You must enroll in an accredited environmental health course, as your future employer must be certain you have the right skills, knowledge and attributes.

Undergraduate courses (entry level)

State	University	Course	Duration	Requirements
WA	Edith Cowan University	Bachelor of Health Science (Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety)	3 years full-time	ATAR 70
NSW	Western Sydney University	Bachelor of Science (Environmental Health)	3 years full-time	ATAR 70
QLD	Central Queensland University	Bachelor of Public Health (Environmental Health)	3 years full-time	ATAR 60
	University of the Sunshine Coast	Bachelor of Health Science (Applied Environmental Health)	3 years full-time	ATAR 50
VIC	La Trobe University	Bachelor of Health Sciences (Environmental Health)	3 years full-time	ATAR 55.25

Postgraduate courses (have completed a degree in another field)

State	University	Course	Duration	Requirements
WA	Curtin University	Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health	1 year full-time	Bachelor degree (or higher qualification)
QLD	Queensland University of Technology	Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health	1 year full-time	A minimum of one semester full-time in basic sciences (chemistry, microbiology, physics, life sciences, etc.)
		Master of Health, Safety and Environment	2 years full-time	
SA	Flinders University	Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health Practice	1 year full-time	microbiology, physics, life sciences, etc.)
		Master of Environmental Health	2 years full-time	

Vocational pathways to become an environmental health technician

The most direct pathway to be an environmental health technician is to enroll in the Diploma of Environmental Health at Edith Cowan University.

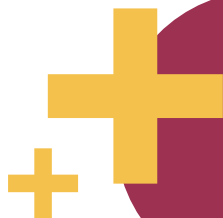
State	University	Course	Duration	Requirements (one of the below)
WA	Edith Cowan University	Diploma of Environmental Health	1 year full-time	ATAR 70
				Year 12 completion with General English grade C or better
				Year 12 completion with a pass in ECU's online English competency test
				Year 10 completion with any vocational qualification (Certificate I, II, III, etc.) and a pass in ECU's online English competency test

Applying to work in WA with international qualifications

Environmental health professionals with international qualifications can apply to have their credentials recognised in WA.

The Western Australian Environmental Health Professional Review Board (WAEHPRB) is responsible for reviewing international applications and assessing an applicant's suitability for practice in WA.

Visit the [WAEHPRB webpage](#) for more information on how international applicants can work as environmental health officers in WA.



Need more information?

Local government jobs

Search for jobs in local government at the following websites:

- Careers at Council
- Council Direct
- Council Jobs
- Local Government Assist
- Local Government Professionals Australia (WA)
- SEEK

WA Health jobs

Search for Scientific Officer jobs and talent pools at WA Health:

- www.jobs.health.wa.gov.au

Universities

Curtin University

W: www.curtin.edu.au

Edith Cowan University

W: www.ecu.edu.au

Western Sydney University

W: www.westernsydney.edu.au

Central Queensland University

W: www.cqu.edu.au

Queensland University of Technology

W: www.qut.edu.au

University of the Sunshine Coast

W: www.usc.edu.au

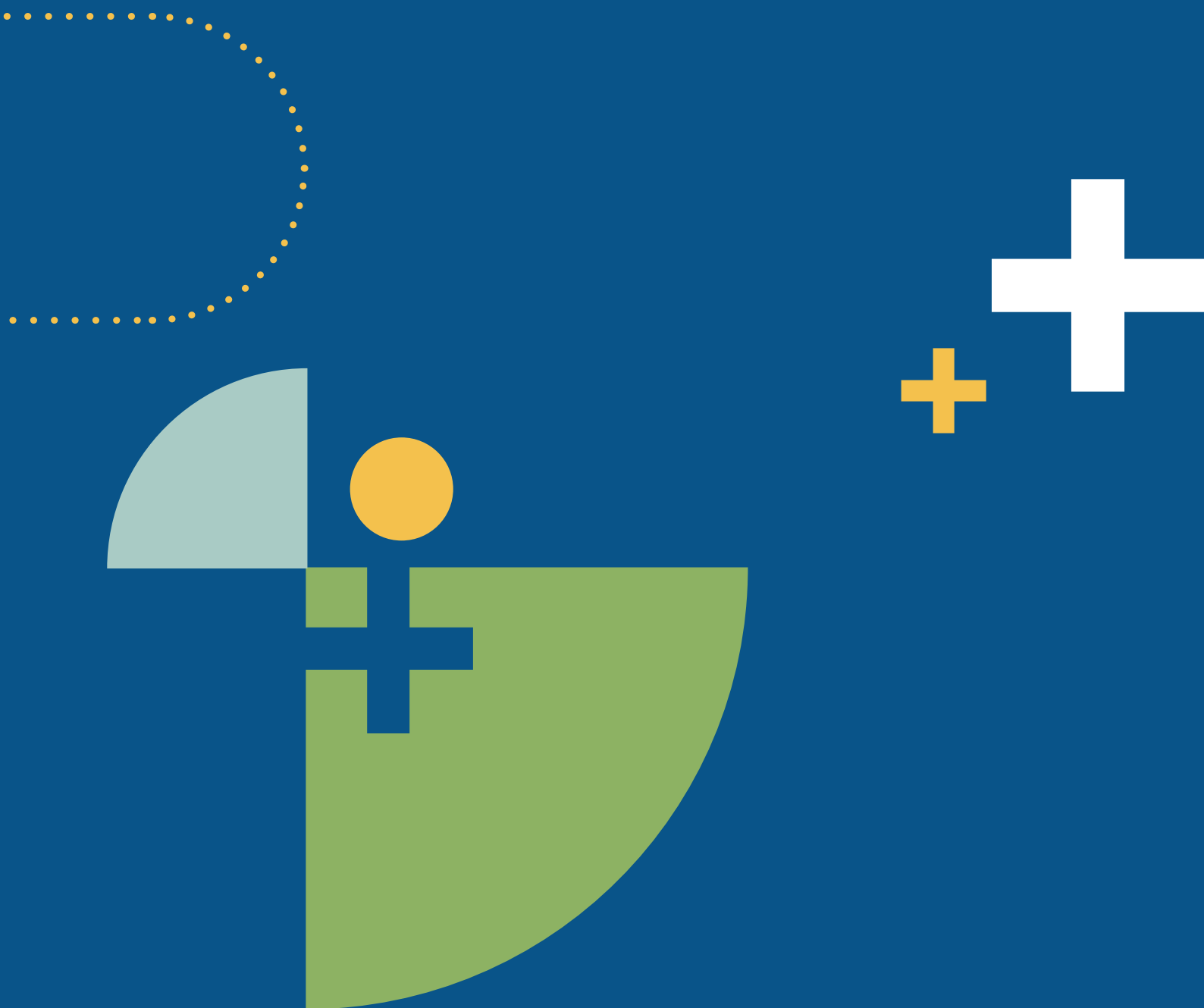
Flinders University

W: www.flinders.edu.au

La Trobe University

W: www.latrobe.edu.au





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