

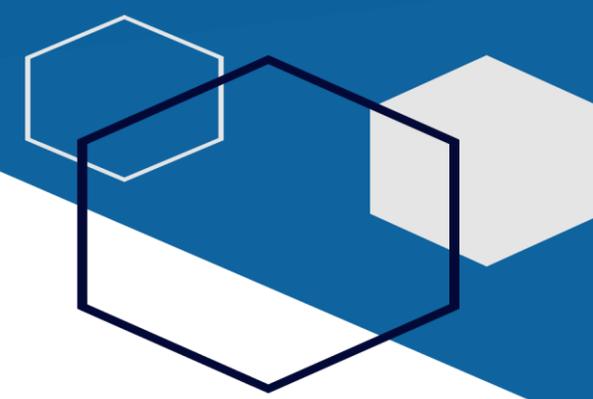


Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# Environmental Health Directorate

## Strategic Plan 2020 - 2023





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### Acknowledgment of Country and People

WA Health acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

## Message from the Chief Health Officer

Almost a quarter of the global disease burden and deaths are due to preventable environmental health concerns.

It is essential that we continue to invest in services which play a critical role in preventative health. This is why the Sustainable Health Review recognised the need to increase preventative health expenditure as a proportion of the total WA Health budget from 1.6% to 5% by July 2029.

I am proud that for many decades WA has maintained high environmental health standards, with the Environmental Health Directorate coordinating the delivery of a range of quality public health programs.

Delivering essentials like safe food and water and regulating industries can sometimes be taken for granted as these services are maintained “behind the scenes” by an extensive team of state and local government professionals.

With a clear strategic focus on prevention for WA, I am very pleased to endorse the outcomes described in this strategy and to oversee its implementation. This strategy supports WA Health and our many partners to continue to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the WA community.

Dr Andy Robertson  
**Chief Health Officer**  
**Public and Aboriginal Health Division**  
**Department of Health WA**



## Message from the Executive Director Environmental Health

Western Australia has a great reputation for having a clean environment with safe places for people to live, work and play.

This is despite the unique challenges given our large, dispersed State, with the most varied landscape and climate in Australia.

The Environmental Health Directorate helps to set standards, administer legislation and educate the community about environmental health risk in partnership with WA local governments, while also evolving to respond to new risks of the 21<sup>st</sup> century - such as climate change, new food production, and increased disease risk from urban expansion to mosquito prone areas.

Our priority is overhauling environmental health laws and modernising our practices under the new risk-based framework of the Public Health Act. We also allocate a significant proportion of our budget to improving living conditions in remote Aboriginal communities.

This strategy is an important step forward to providing clear direction on existing and emerging risks, to our many partners involved in delivering environmental health.

Dr Michael Lindsay  
**Executive Director**  
**Environmental Health Directorate**  
**Department of Health WA**



# About the Environmental Health Directorate

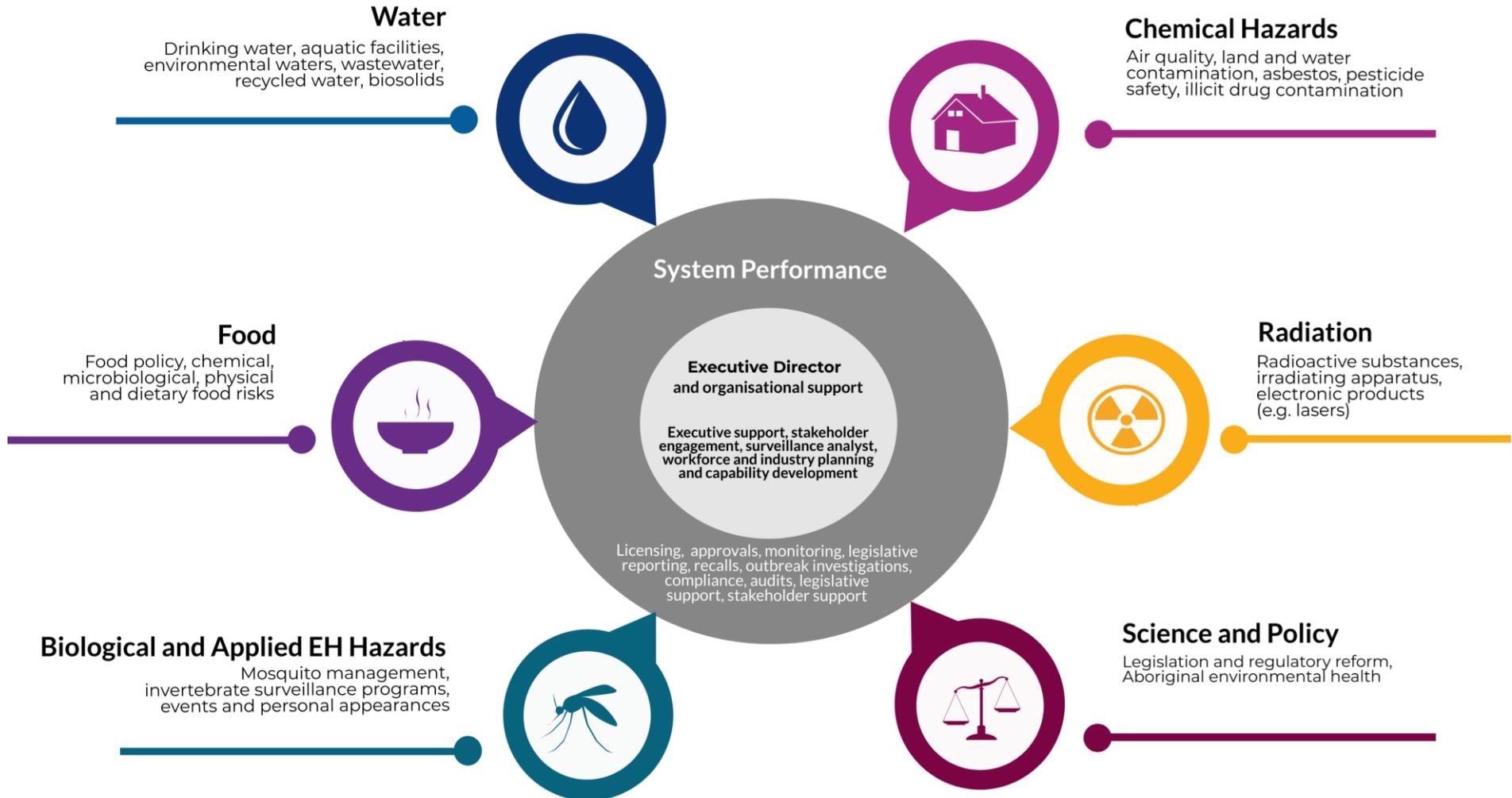
The Environmental Health Directorate (the EHD) of the WA Department of Health, Public and Aboriginal Health Division, is the government sector with responsibility for maintaining public and environmental health (EH) standards across WA. Our role is to ensure appropriate management strategies, such as legislation, guidelines, surveillance, monitoring and public education, are in place to prevent disease, illness, injury, disability and premature death arising from environmental exposures and other environmental health impacts.

We work closely with the local government environmental health workforce who deliver a broad range of compliance, enforcement and educational activities to ensure a high standard of environmental health is maintained at a local district level.



# Our structure

The EHD manages seven program areas, supported by the Executive Director and supporting team to deliver our strategic outcomes and services.



# Strategic alignment

The outcomes and strategies described in this plan align with National and State planning and review activities.

We report annually on our activities that align with the objectives and key priorities described in the:

- [WA State Public Health Plan<sup>1</sup>](#)
- [WA Sustainable Health Review<sup>2</sup>](#)
- [WA Health Strategic Intent](#)

We also seek to align with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), who oversee the [National Environmental Health Standing Committee<sup>3</sup>](#), by focusing on:

- prevention and early intervention activities
- high priority actions that align with our outcomes
- sharing co-ordination with key stakeholders
- responding to concerns arising in priority populations or new and emerging issues
- examining environmental health risk factors and ensuring cost effective interventions.



<sup>1</sup> Department of Health, 2019. State Public Health Plan for Western Australian [Online] [Accessed 20 August 2019]

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health, 2019. Sustainable Health Review [Online] [Accessed 19 November 2019]

<sup>3</sup> enHealth, 2018. Preventing Disease and Injury Through Healthy Environments. *Environmental Health Standing Committee Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020* [Online] [Accessed 23 January 2020]

# Environmental health strategic outcomes

**We deliver a diverse range of activities, including the management of seven Acts, and thirty-one subsidiary regulations. As a trusted regulator and community educator, we work together with State and local governments and industry to protect the health and safety of the WA community.**

Our activities fall broadly into three core outcomes described below, with the ultimate impact of preventing disease, injury, disability and premature death, while supporting economic and social benefits for the WA community.



# Safe food and water



# Outcome 1: Safe food and water

| Priority 1.1 Food that is safe and suitable to eat   | Priority 1.2 Water that is safe to use   |
|--|--|
| <p>Access to safe and suitable food is a vital public health requirement. The risks of unsafe and unsuitable food are substantial with the potential to cause foodborne illness or injury from food contaminants. It is estimated that every percentage reduction in the level of foodborne illness saves industry and the health system \$5.44 million per annum. Therefore, it is critical that food sold in WA is both safe and suitable for consumers.</p> <p>Our role is to manage the WA food regulatory system, enforce legislation for specific primary production industries, public hospitals and food businesses not in a local district, provide guidance to local government enforcement agencies to support the effective and consistent implementation of food legislation across WA, and provide input into the National food safety agenda.</p> | <p>Safe drinking water and sanitation are fundamental to health and are an essential human right. Waterborne illnesses and the risk of harm may arise from different sources of water. These risks need to be managed through various regulatory and non-regulatory approaches across government, industries and the public.</p> <p>It is essential that safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is provided throughout WA. We oversee all forms of water use in WA, examining chemical, microbiological, radiological, physical hazards and risk assessment and risk mitigation activities required to protect and promote public health.</p>   |
| Key objectives   | Key objectives   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manage and maintain legislation and guidance to support the WA food regulatory system</li> <li>2. Contribute to and implement national food policy, standards and other national food regulation agendas</li> <li>3. Manage and enforce regulatory requirements for primary production industries; meat, dairy and bivalve molluscs, public hospitals and food businesses not in a local government</li> <li>4. Increase consumer awareness about foodborne diseases and promote safe food preparation, handling and storage practices</li> <li>5. Coordinate state-wide food outbreaks, food recalls and surveillance programs</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review, update and implement legislation and policies for drinking water, aquatic facilities, wastewater and environmental waters</li> <li>2. Provide guidance and training to industry, and educate the public, about water related hazards and risk management measures to mitigate public health risks</li> <li>3. Assess innovative design, management and use of equipment and technology associated with water use and reuse</li> <li>4. Develop public policy on water related health impacts associated with climate change and the sustainable use of water</li> <li>5. Support water sensitive urban design and development to improve both physical and mental health outcomes</li> </ol> |
| Environmental Health indicators  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rates of foodborne illnesses</li> <li>▪ Number of food outbreaks reported to WA Health</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rates of waterborne illness</li> </ul>  |

# Healthy built environments and safer industries



## Outcome 2: Healthy built environments and safer industries

| Priority 2.1 Improved environmental health conditions in remote Aboriginal communities   | Priority 2.2 Safe public events, homes and public buildings   |
|--|---|
| <p>The environments in which Aboriginal people live have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Initiatives in Aboriginal communities give attention to healthy environments, healthy policies and support for a skilled and competent Aboriginal health workforce.</p> <p>We are responsible for working closely with the many organisations and individuals that support a range of projects, programs and other initiatives to address improvements in environmental health conditions in remote and regional Aboriginal communities.</p>  | <p>There are various risks in and around the home, as well as the neighbouring community, that may potentially expose people to illness or injury if not managed appropriately.</p> <p>We work closely with governments and industry to ensure safeguards are in place to reduce or eliminate risks within public buildings such as entertainment centres and theatres, community events such as outdoor festivals or sporting event, and residential buildings.</p>  |
| Key objectives   | Key objectives  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate the delivery of the Aboriginal Environmental Health program across WA to offer and provide environmental health related services to remote Aboriginal communities</li> <li>2. Conduct workforce development and regional training for environmental health practitioners working with regional and remote Aboriginal communities</li> <li>3. Promote and support the establishment and use of community environmental health action plans</li> <li>4. Implement improvements in trachoma at-risk communities including emergency plumbing repairs and safe bathroom checks</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support event managers and local governments to minimise risks related to major public events, public building use and mass gatherings</li> <li>2. Promote safety at public events through improved coordination of emergency services</li> <li>3. Review and update regulations and guidelines to manage environmental health risks in the home, public buildings and community events</li> <li>4. Increase community awareness about minimising risks in and around the home</li> </ol> |
| Environmental health indicators  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rates of the top 10 diseases where there is disparity between Aboriginal people and the general population</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incidence of verified reports associated with built environments</li> </ul>  |

# Outcome 2: Healthy built environments and safer industries

## Priority 2.3 Control of pesticide use, tobacco, radiation and personal appearance industries

The activities of specific industries can impact on the health of individuals and the wider community. This includes the application of chemicals or pesticides in public open spaces, the impact of second-hand smoke in areas such as beaches, cafes or children’s playgrounds, the use and management of radiological equipment, and personal appearance procedures such as tattooing that can potentially expose people to infectious diseases.

We ensure a range of regulatory controls are in place such as licensing, registration and auditing services, to ensure an appropriate level of industry oversight to protect the community from potential health risks.

### Key objectives

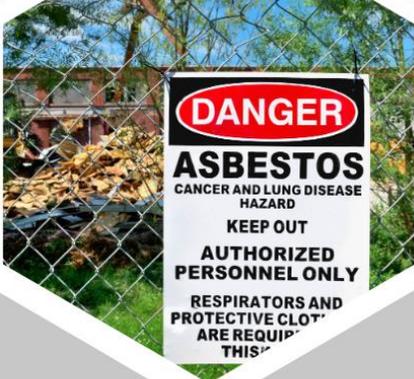
1. Licence, inspect and investigate pest management businesses (including technicians and vehicles) and tobacco retailers
2. Promote the safe use of pesticides in the community and public places when non-chemical alternatives are not available or feasible
3. Licence, inspect and investigate radiation users and premises
4. Maintain and implement radiation protection standards
5. Review and update relevant industry regulations and guidelines for pesticides, radiation and beauty therapy and personal appearance industries

### Environmental Health indicators

- Incidence of selected cancers related to environmental health concerns
- Average number of non-compliances per inspected business



# Managed community hazards



# Outcome 3: Managed community hazards

| Priority 3.1 Minimised mosquito-borne disease risks   | Priority 3.2 Reduced exposure to hazardous substances  |
|---|--|
| <p>There is no cure or vaccine to protect against mosquito-borne diseases acquired in WA. Outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus diseases have been known to occur across WA and mosquito management plays an important role in reducing such public health risks.</p> <p>We undertake a range of surveillance activities and engage with local government to ensure integrated mosquito management strategies are implemented to reduce the pest or vector (disease carrying) mosquitoes to a level where the impact on the WA population is kept to an acceptable low level. Climate change and increased air travel can also provide opportunities for the entry and establishment of exotic mosquito species with the capacity to introduce disease risks not currently present in WA.</p> | <p>Hazardous substances have the potential to be very harmful to human health, can remain in the environment for a very long time and are suspected of contributing to a wide range of health concerns, from asthma to cancer.</p> <p>An awareness of environmental hazards, an understanding of how to properly manage them, and effective interventions to prevent diseases and illness from environmental exposure is essential. We make sure appropriate precautions are in place to reduce exposure to hazardous substances that may be present in the community and monitor emerging risks to ensure the community is protected from any undue harm.</p> |
| Key objectives  | Key objectives   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist local government with technical advice and funding through the Contiguous Local Authorities Group (CLAG) Scheme</li> <li>2. Conduct enhanced surveillance of locally acquired and exotic mosquito-borne disease notifications</li> <li>3. Monitor exotic mosquito detections at the Perth airport and WA shipping ports</li> <li>4. Increase community awareness about mosquito-borne disease risks</li> <li>5. Monitor mosquito populations and virus activity in the South West and northern WA</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess and manage risks to public health from contaminated land</li> <li>2. Ensure the safe use of pesticides and chemicals</li> <li>3. Increase awareness and regulate the safe use, storage and disposal of asbestos containing materials, chemicals and other hazardous substances</li> <li>4. Promote healthy indoor and outdoor air quality</li> <li>5. Provide a robust notification process and guidance material to support the management of illicit drug contamination in homes</li> </ol>   |
| Environmental Health indicators   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual rate and 5 year moving average rate per 100,000 population for Barmah Forest virus, and Ross River virus. Case notifications for Murray Valley encephalitis and West Nile virus (kunjin subtype) disease</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of verified complaints about air quality, pesticide and asbestos issues</li> <li>▪ Number of verified complaints about poor remediation practices of premises related to illicit drug use and manufacture</li> </ul>   |

# Outcome 3: Managed community hazards

## Priority 3.3 Mitigated impacts of environmental health emergencies and emerging risks

It is important that governments and communities are prepared to prevent, respond to, and rapidly recover from public health emergencies which could involve multiple casualties or cause significant disruption to the standard of living. These can include severe weather events, natural disasters such as floods and bushfires, or man-made emergencies such as a major chemical or radiation emergencies.

We ensure environmental health risk factors are considered in State emergency management planning and preparedness, systems are in place to respond to environmental health incidents, and the community are kept well informed about matters that may impact their health.

### Key objectives

1. Ensure timely response to state wide emergency management incidents that require an environmental health response
2. Provide emergency preparedness for radiation incidents/accidents
3. Provide community health advice for environmental health incidents
4. Contribute to climate change adaptation planning to mitigate environmental health impacts
5. Investigate and facilitate a response to emerging environmental health issues

### Environmental Health indicators

- Qualitative feedback from stakeholders on timeliness and effectiveness of emergency response



# Organisational supports



25,330 food businesses in WA

331 environmental health degree

63 'other' qualifications

31,222 onsite assessments of food businesses

1408 improvement notices

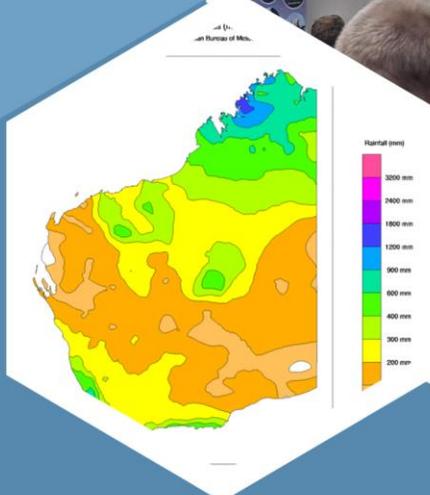
647 infringement notices

78 prosecutions instigated

2009 service of food to vulnerable persons

21,120 food service/retail

299P



# Organisational supports

We have six supporting objectives to enhance our business operations that aim to deliver effective services to our staff and stakeholders.

| Organisational supports   | Key priorities  |
|---|---|
|  <p><b>Staff</b><br/>Support staff with building capacity and knowledge management</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake workforce planning to ensure staffing resources, succession planning and leadership development align to our strategic plan, legislative requirements and the long term needs of delivering public and aboriginal health outcomes</li><li>• Build knowledge management systems to support an adaptive and flexible workforce</li><li>• Progress initiatives that support the implementation of the Department of Health's desired workplace culture</li></ul> |
|  <p><b>Performance</b><br/>Report on and measure our performance</p>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly review and report on strategic priorities</li><li>• Develop and implement a project management approach to new initiatives, incidents and issue prioritisation to ensure alignment of work with key priorities</li><li>• Implement the Department of Health performance management systems and develop a culture of performance conversations</li></ul>   |
|  <p><b>Impact</b><br/>Measure and describe the impact of our work on communities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement an outcome indicator framework to monitor the impact of environmental health programs</li><li>• Update publications to describe impact of environmental health activities on communities</li><li>• Develop a strategic surveillance approach to assessing and responding to risks in specific communities</li></ul>   |

## Organisational supports

## Key priorities



### Technology

Use technology solutions to improve service delivery

- Deliver online interactive dashboards for staff to improve operational delivery
- Use technological platforms to create more efficient workflows and better customer service
- Deliver a 24/7 online licencing solution to cut red tape for business
- Transition to using technologies to support efficient networking with regional and national stakeholders



### Resources

Manage resources to meet our business needs

- Review content on the corporate and community websites to improve relevance and accessibility to information
- Implement a coordinated approach to advocating for environmental health
- Undertake innovative projects to optimise delivery of the EHD's current and future business objectives



### Stakeholders

Understand stakeholder needs and share timely and quality information

- Develop strong stakeholder relationships, communication systems and workforce planning to support our stakeholders
- Ensure regular communication and information exchange sessions between stakeholders
- Conduct regular stakeholder satisfaction surveys to inform the EHD's performance.
- Engage with stakeholders to identify needs and respond in adapting our service delivery
- Undertake industry workforce planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of delivering environmental health services and achieving public health outcomes across WA

# Reporting and monitoring

## Annual review

This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to respond to the needs of the WA community and our stakeholders.

## Surveillance and reporting

To support the implementation of the Plan, individual program areas are responsible for identifying actions that support meeting each priority and are required to report progress at regular intervals. Program areas are also required to monitor and initiate a response to emerging evidence for new environmental health risks of concern to WA.

The EHD regularly collects and analyses a range of environmental health activity data that aligns with the priorities of this plan, including:

- licensing and registration for specific industries
- compliance, enforcement and complaints investigations for specific industries
- State-wide food and water quality monitoring
- State-wide disease notifications and outbreak investigations
- State-wide food incidents and food recalls
- State-wide arbovirus surveillance
- State-wide reports from local governments on their performance of functions under the *Food Act 2008* and *Public Health Act 2016*

This data is published each year in the EHD Financial Yearbook<sup>4</sup>.

## High level indicator reporting

The EHD is committed to developing Environmental Health indicators for WA to monitor progress towards meeting our strategic outcomes. The EHD aims to deliver an indicator framework that describes the activities of both State and local governments, which may include a:

- public dashboard for the community on Environmental Health indicators relevant to the EHD
- dashboard of Environmental Health outcomes reported at a local government level



<sup>4</sup> Department of Health. 2019. Environmental Health Directorate Yearbook. [Online] [Accessed 24 January 2020]

# Enabling legislation

The EHD is required to manage the requirements stipulated in the following Acts and regulations.

*Public Health Act 2016*

*Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911*

## **Environmental health hazards**

*Construction Camp Regulations*

*Fly Eradication Regulations*

*Health (Air-handling and Water Systems) Regulations 1994*

*Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992*

*Health (Cloth Materials) Regulation 1985*

*Health Act (Carbon Monoxide) Regulations 1975*

*Health (Garden Soil) Regulations 1998*

*Hairdressing Establishment Regulations 1972*

*Health (Skin Penetration Procedure) Regulations 1998*

*Health (Offensive Trades Fees) Regulations 1976*

*Health (Construction Work) Regulations 1973*

*Health Act (Laundries and Bathrooms) Regulations*

*Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992*

*Health (Rottneest Island) By-laws 1989*

*Health (Pesticides) Regulations 2011*

*Health (Prescribed Insect Pests) Regulations 1991*

*Health (Notification of Lead Poisoning) Regulations 1985*

*Health (Section 112(2) Prohibition) Regulations 2006*

*Piggeries Regulations 1952*

*Registration, Enforcement and Discharge of Local Authority*

*Charges on Land Regulations*

*Sewerage (Lighting, Ventilation and Construction) Regulations 1971*

## **Food**

*Food Act 2008*

*Food Regulations 2009*

## **Water**

*Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1966*

*Health (Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste) Regulations 1974*

*Health (Temporary Sanitary Conveniences) Regulations 1997*

*Health Act (Underground Water Supply) Regulations 1959*

*Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007*

## **Radiation Health**

*Nuclear Waste Storage and Transportation (Prohibition) Act 1999*

## **Radiation Health as secretariat to the Radiological Council**

*Radiation Safety Act 1975*

*Radiation Safety (General) Regulations 1983*

*Radiation Safety (Qualifications) Regulations 1980*

*Radiation Safety (Transport of Radioactive Substances) Regulations 2002*

## **Tobacco**

*Tobacco Products Control Act 2006*

*Tobacco Products Control Regulations 2006*

## **Contaminated sites**

*Contaminated Sites Act 2003 (Minister for Environment)*

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This document was prepared by:

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**Feedback**

Any feedback related to this document should be emailed to [ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au)



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