



## TOWN WATER FACT SHEET

### Are you experiencing discoloured water?

Discoloured tap water can be a localised occurrence and can be caused by a number of factors.

Yellow, rust, reddish/brown and black water is usually caused by minerals such as iron and manganese. While these elements are always present in the water in extremely low levels, a decrease in aeration of the source water can cause them to dissolve into the water at much higher rates. For Glen Innes, this occurs after summer storms when organic debris is washed into the Beardy Weir and decomposes in warm weather. Oxygen is consumed by natural processes faster than our aeration system can keep up with at these times, and Manganese levels increase rapidly. In the off stream storage, however, aeration systems maintain low levels at all times because it is not affected by debris loaded flood waters. When the off stream storage is in use, discoloured water does not generally occur. The off stream storage is used at all times, unless blue green algae is present. Council is purchasing equipment to manage the algae issues, and so discoloured water from poor aeration should become a thing of the past when that is installed.

Deposits of iron and manganese have built up on the inside of pipes due to this occurring over many decades. When flow rates change, such as when occurs during a water main break or firefighting activity, this build up can be dislodged and create a localised discoloration.

Blue stains in the water may be caused by corrosion of internal plumbing. This is common if the hot water cylinder is made from copper.

Milky or white water occurs when air becomes trapped in the pipes, usually after a main break has been repaired or from faulty pumps and air valves. It is harmless and will not stain your laundry. If a glass of milky water is left to sit for 30 minutes it should become clear as the air bubbles dissipate.

### Is discoloured tap water safe to drink?

While not appealing, discoloured tap water is safe to drink and is not a cause of stomach upsets or diarrhoea. Council carries out weekly water quality tests to ensure water complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. The NSW Department of Health also perform regular water quality tests. Find out more about Council's water services and its rigorous water quality testing at Council's website <http://www.gisc.nsw.gov.au/environment/water-services> .



## What should I do if I experience discoloured tap water?

First, check with your neighbours to see if their tap water is discoloured too. Sometimes water discolouration is a result of internal property or house pipelines problems. Residents need to arrange their own plumber for these issues.

Run the water tap located closest to your water meter into a bucket for a few minutes. If the water is not clear, repeat this in half an hour. If the water in the front tap has not improved call the Water Services staff on phone 0418 162 794.

Once the water in the front tap is clear, clear your inside water lines by running the back garden tap or an inside tap into a bucket until the water is clear. Water collected during this process may be used your garden.

If you are experiencing repeat discoloured water incidents, it is essential that you contact Council's Water Services staff directly to ensure the issue is appropriately resolved.

## Can I do a load of washing?

Check the colour of the water before doing a load of washing by following the process above. Do not wash until the water is clear. It is especially important to check before the final rinse cycle as this is the time when clothes can be stained. Avoid using oxidising agents such as laundry bleach as this may intensify stains.

## What should I do if my washing is stained?

Keep your washing wet. When the water clears, try rewashing with clean water and your usual detergent. Don't let your washing dry or use bleach products as this may set the stains. If stains are not removed following rewashing contact Council's water staff on 0418 162 794.

## Can I use my dishwasher?

It is best not to use your dishwasher until the water is clear. Discoloured water will not affect the operation of your dishwasher, but it may stain items.

## Can I wash in discoloured water?

It is safe to shower and bath children and babies in discoloured water. As a precaution let the shower run until the water clears. Collect water in a bucket and reuse it on your garden.



## Can I fill my swimming pool?

Avoid topping up swimming pools until the water is clear. If you have concerns, follow the process above.

## Is there anything I can install in my home to prevent discoloured water?

Many homes now have small filters or aerators on tap outlets, however, it is unlikely they will prevent discoloured water. These devices can quickly become blocked, so it is important to check and clean them regularly to avoid bacteria build up. Filters on your washing machine do not necessarily prevent laundry from becoming stained.

## Tell me something about the Glen Innes water system.

The Glen Innes water supply network was first constructed in 1930 and many of the original mains are still in use. The network includes over 96 kilometres of water pipeline. Council does routine mains flushing to minimise issues of discolouration. Council also engages external contractors to perform air/water scouring of the mains. This process removes up to six times more scale than water flushing alone.

An annual program of water mains renewal is budgeted for each year to provide cost-effective supply of treated water and reduce the incidence of main breaks.

Did you know that the quarry off stream water storage at 565 megalitres, has 16% larger water storage capacity than the Beardy Weir, but lasts three times longer due to less evaporation! Glen Innes now has 2 ½ years supply in reserve from the time the Beardy Waters ceases flowing over the weir.

**For all water or wastewater enquiries please contact Council on 6730 2371 (BH) or Water Services staff on 0418 162 794 (A/H).**

