

16 January 2020

Media Release - Uralla Town Water Supply Update

Together with the State Government's Senior Technical Officers Uralla Shire Council has been working to identify and provide a technical solution to removing arsenic from the water supply.

A preferred treatment process is being finalised to reduce the arsenic levels in the treated water to below Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. This solution will need a Granulated Activated Carbon Filter to be installed at the water treatment plant. The strategy for this installation is now being developed but the installation of the equipment will take two months to implement with further time needed for the plant to reach full production.

The arsenic is originating from the groundwater entering the tributaries that flow into Council's raw water storage. These flows have been the primary inflows into the Kentucky Creek Dam as a result of the low levels in the storage and the ongoing drought.

"The initial assessment was based on adjusting the existing treatment processes to reduce the arsenic to acceptable levels and provide a speedy resolution. However it now appears this is not the case due to the molecular structure of the arsenic," Uralla Shire Council's Acting General Manager Mr David Aber said. "I would like to apologise to the community for this extended timeframe to meet drinking water supply guidelines."

"I appreciate the community's effort by pulling together during the do not drink alert and ask that this spirit of cooperation, information sharing and checking in on our neighbours remains."

"The do not drink alert will remain in place for at least the next 100 days to allow for installation and testing," Mr Aber said. "We remain committed to providing safe drinking water as soon as possible but it will take longer than originally expected and I want to prepare the community for this."

Filtration with granular activated carbon will make a significant difference to the levels, however there may be need for more than one bank of filters to meet normal supply. A staged approach to provide the necessary volume to provide for normal usage may be required. As a result Level 5 restrictions will continue to be applied regardless of the storage volumes in the Kentucky Creek Dam.

The previously planned maintenance to the sand filtration plant would have had no impact on the situation if completed last year. This system is having very little effect on arsenic levels due to its molecular form and as a result specialist filtration using granular activated carbon will be needed.

Bottled water will continue to be funded by the NSW State Government and distributed behind Foodworks Uralla and also from Invergowrie Store.

"We will be providing regular updates on the work we are undertaking to resolve this issue and I encourage the community to check our Facebook page and website for the most up to date information." Mr Aber added, "I'd also like to encourage residents to contact us directly by phone or email so we can help with any questions or concerns".

[ENDS]

David Aber – Acting General Manager