

20 November 2024

OPEN LETTER TO THE RESIDENTS OF COOKTOWN

Re. Discolouration of the town water supply

Many of you would have noticed the discoloration in Cooktown's town water supply. Council teams are working hard to identify the cause of the problem and put a solution in place.

Here's what we know for sure:

- Following Tropical Cyclone Jasper, the Water Intake Tower at the Annan Water Treatment Plant was inundated with floodwaters. Sediment in the floodwaters damaged the pumps at the Intake Tower. Council replaced the damaged pumps in October 2024.
- Since the replacement, there have been periods of discoloured water in Cooktown's supply.
- Flushing of reservoirs and pipes has been carried out, but this has not resolved the issue.
- Comprehensive testing across multiple sites confirms that the water is safe to drink, with bacteria and coliform levels well within acceptable limits.

Here's what we suspect:

- The pump replacement coincided with the discoloration but is not the direct cause.
- Iron and manganese levels may be higher than usual in the Annan water supply.
- These minerals are likely causing the discoloration, as we've seen similar issues in other regional water sources, such as the Bloomfield area.
- This increase in mineral concentration could be linked to soil and rocks exposed by landslides in the catchment area during Tropical Cyclone Jasper, as this has not been previously observed in the Annan water supply.

We are currently seeking independent expert advice to confirm these findings and determine how best to address the issue. Testing will continue in the meantime.

It's possible that this issue will resolve naturally with the onset of the wet season when waterways begin to flow more freely. However, if mineral concentrations continue to increase at the end of each dry season, we may need to implement long-term solutions. These will require additional infrastructure and time to develop.

I understand the frustration this issue has caused, and I can assure you that Council staff feel the same. We also live here and, when things go wrong, have to make the same adjustments to our normal lives. We will continue to provide updates on our website and Facebook page as more information becomes available. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours faithfully,



Brian Joiner
Chief Executive Officer