

SEGRA Challenge 2015-16

Securing Adequate Safe Domestic Water for Rural and Remote Regional Australia

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Convened by:

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Background

The ***SEGRA Challenge 2015-16 Securing Adequate Safe Domestic Water for Rural and Remote Regional Australia*** initiated a multi-partner project that aims to improve the adequacy and quality of domestic water for rural and remote regional Australia.

Overview – The project outcomes were/are centred on educating communities about associated health risks, ensuring LGA's are resourced to provide safe domestic water and increased investment in technology.

WHY - How can we achieve Sustainable Economic Development in Regional Australia when the Domestic Water is a potential health risk?

Work to Date - between April and September we focused on:

- engagement activities in the Gulf and Darling Basin regions in Queensland to build the collaborative adaptive research model,
- gaining a better understanding of the issues relating to the adequacy and quality of domestic water supplies and potential health risks
- Conducting a pilot screening for *E.coli* in domestic supplies and a questionnaire survey in Etheridge Shire (the entire Gilbert River Catchment)

Scope and approach

The key lessons and actions arising from Phase I have helped to frame a draft scope of tasks that could be undertaken for Phase II and Phase III of the **SEGRA Challenge 2015-16, *Securing Adequate Safe Domestic Water for Rural and Remote Regional Australia***.

Experience with Phase I found that the scope of water quality screening, property survey, engagement, communications and data collection activities will need to be revised to fit with:

- partner commitment
- human and financial resources
- the geographic realities of travel.

Horrible Statistics

- 207 properties were surveyed and 152 (73%) provided samples for analysis
- 33% of properties had *E.coli* in the samples
- *E.coli* was found in all sources of domestic water (rainwater tanks, surface supplies, shallow bores, deep bores)
- 78% of respondents were using untreated water
- 12% boiled water for drinking and cooking
- 73% were not at all concerned about the quality of their water supplies
- 3% were highly concerned about the quality of their water

AND

12 households reported having children under the age of ten.

- 10 samples were found to have *E.coli*
- one household having a child under one year;
- 7 with children 1-4; and
- two with children 5-9.

What did we learn?

The key lessons and actions arising from Phase I have helped to frame a draft scope of tasks that could be undertaken for Phase II and Phase III of the **SEGRA Challenge 2015-16**

Experience with Phase I found that the scope of water quality screening, property survey, engagement, communications and data collection activities will need to be revised to fit with:

- partner commitment
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- the geographic realities of travel.

Governmental commitment and resources

Arguably, progressing this collaborative initiative will be enhanced by:

- having greater clarity on governmental policies on domestic water from private supplies
- securing an overarching governmental commitment
- appropriate inter and intergovernmental arrangements to underpin water quality screening and property holder surveys.

Adequate resources are seen as a major constraint to furthering the project. To date, ESC has allocated human resources and funds for the pilot screening and the SEGA Foundation has committed professional staff. ILWS-CSU has provided professional staff and funds to undertake engagement, data analysis and reporting tasks.

Other partners to the collaboration have provided high level professional input to issue scoping and engagement activities.

Additional resources are needed to effectively deliver the remaining phases of this first stage of the initiative.

WHERE COULD THEY COME FROM AND WHEN?