



Provision of Safe and Reliable Water to the Yuelamu Community Report to Central Desert Regional Council – 5 August 2016

Background

Power and Water has been working with the Central Desert Regional Council and the Department of Health to ensure that there is adequate drinking water available for the residents of Yuelamu.

During June and July, Power and Water have undertaken testing and investigation to assess the viability of the current bore field and identify possible alternate water sources. This update to Council outlines findings from this work and other relevant developments.

Update

- A report from an independent water quality specialist in late April advised that the algal bloom may not go away even when the weather cools down, and if it does die off it is likely to return with warmer weather.
- Ongoing testing has shown that there has been a significant reduction in the number of algal cells over June/July, and the visual appearance of the dam is much less green. However, there has not been a corresponding decrease in toxin levels in the dam, meaning it is still unfit for drinking. Regular testing is continuing, and it is now expected that algal cell counts will again increase in around two months when temperatures increase.
- Power and Water completed inspection and cleaning of Bore 1 during June following concerns that production from the bore was dropping due to over-use. Production rate from the bore has returned to expected levels.
- Power and Water undertook electromagnetic (EM) investigation of the area around the dam and the existing bore field in July, in an attempt to identify additional suitable water sources. Preliminary results suggest that there are no additional drinking-water quality aquifers in the areas surveyed.
- In July, Power and water upgraded the standing water level monitoring equipment at the existing bore field. This will enable Power and Water to more accurately measure the impact of the current rate of bore water extraction on the bore field.
- In conjunction with the CLC, Power and Water met with traditional owners and elders from Yuelamu in July to seek knowledge about traditional water sources in the area. This information has been passed on to hydrogeologists for further consideration.

- Power and Water are finalising planning for moving the potable water tap off the road. Subject to approvals, it is expected that this work will be completed in the week starting 15/8.

Request Council:

1. Note that Power and Water specialists are working hard to remedy the considerable inconvenience to Yuelamu residents that this unusual and unexpected algal bloom has caused to the water system at Yuelamu and the unforeseen continuation of this issue.
2. Note that during this period where dam water has been unavailable, Power and Water has been working with the local community to provide alternate means to obtain drinking water and has conducted public communications and advertising to ensure that the community is informed.
3. Note that securing an adequate and viable water supply for the community remains a critical and urgent priority for Power and Water and the Northern Territory Government.
4. Assist in communicating key messages provided to community residents, so that they are made aware of the situation and options under investigation.
5. Note the significant work and expenditure committed by Power and Water to identifying alternative water sources, and ensuring water security from the existing bore field.
6. Acknowledge the joint work undertaken by CDRC and Power and Water towards moving the water collection point to increase safety.
7. Note the assistance provided by local CDRD staff, and traditional owners and elders from Yuelamu in assisting Power and Water and providing knowledge of traditional water sources.