

Coloured and dirty water

How water becomes coloured and dirty

Coloured and dirty water may occur in a number of ways.

The weather can stir up the water in Darwin River Dam reservoir between November and May causing increased levels of natural iron and manganese to enter the water supply, colouring the water yellowish/brownish. Coloured water has been tested and is safe to drink and use.

Yellow/rusty coloured water can be caused by rusting galvanised iron pipe used in household plumbing. The water will have a metallic or stale taste and may cause discolouring of laundry.

Green/blue coloured water and similar coloured stains on sanitary fittings may be due to corroding copper pipes used in household plumbing.

Both yellow/rusty and green/blue coloured water usually occurs if water has not been used on the property overnight or after a period of absence from the household. It can be reduced by running your tap for several minutes to flush the stale water from the system. It may, however, also indicate that new plumbing is required.

White, cloudy or milky water is caused by air trapped in pipelines and most commonly occurs after a burst water main has been fixed, or if carbon dioxide is released by a sudden reduction in water pressure with a tap discharging. Air-induced cloudy water will quickly clear and is harmless and safe to drink.

Sometimes when there is an increase in the flow of water through the pipes sediment can be stirred up within those pipes, dirtying the water and small particles may be seen. The sediment is made up of iron, manganese and clay particles. This can happen at any time of year but usually occurs more often in seasonal changes, eg early in the Dry Season. If you experience dirty water, run at least two taps or turn on your garden irrigation or sprinkler system for a few minutes until the water clears.

Coloured or dirty water may cause white laundry to discolour, which should be kept wet and treated with a stain remover or dishwashing detergent. If laundry is allowed to dry without treatment it may stain.

What Power and Water Corporation is doing to reduce the problem:

- Power and Water has ongoing programs in various centres to reduce the corrosivity of water and to flush pipelines to remove dirty water.
- A comprehensive flushing program is conducted in Darwin every year at the end of the Dry Season as water demand, and potential for dirty water increases.
- If at any stage you are concerned about dirty water, or strange tastes or odours in the water supply contact us on 1800 245 092.