

**14 April 2009**

## **System failure responsible for Westport water woes**

A system fault with the treated water reservoir alarm system is at the root of Westport's water woes over Easter.

The town experienced a sudden drop off of water pressure on Monday morning, followed by severely discoloured water once pressure was resumed.

A fault with the treatment plant backwash cycle resulted in no water entering the treatment plant, leaving the town supply reliant on the treated water in the stored reservoir. An automated alarm should ring when the water level in the treated water reservoir drops to a certain level, allowing sufficient time to enable staff to respond.

A failure with this alarm system meant that staff were not notified, and the treated water reservoir was eventually drained, causing the sudden loss of water pressure.

Residue from the bottom of the reservoir entered the mains system, which was then pushed through to the town once full pressure was restored, causing discolouration.

"At this time, we are investigating the initial backwash cycle fault and the subsequent alarm system failure," says Steve Griffin, Manager of Operations. "The alarm system is designed to enable staff sufficient time to respond to such a failure. We are still investigating why this did not happen."

The water provided on Monday to reinstate supply was untreated and Council placed radio announcements advising residents to boil drinking water until further notice. Approximately 40 local businesses with reliance on water, who were operating on Easter Monday, were also contacted. "In instances such as this, we encourage residents to follow the same procedure as in a Civil Defence or emergency type situation. We have a 24hour number that can be rung for information, and we will advertise any important information on local station Coast FM," says Mr Griffin.

“The Council apologises for the inconvenience to residents as a result of the fault,” says Council Chief Executive, Gary Murphy. “We realise that the discoloured water has caused particular issues for some residents, and anyone with specific concerns should provide their contact details to our customer service team. We will follow up individual issues with the residents concerned.”

The town is once again on treated supply, with water tests from the end of line stations all showing treated water in supply. Residents are no longer required to boil water.

WestReef staff spent much of Easter Monday flushing the town supply system from fire hydrants. Residents who are still experiencing some residual water discoloration should run their outside hose tap for several minutes.

**ENDS**



**Further information; Steve Griffin (Operations Manager)  
Buller District Council (03) 788 9111**