



## *Media Statement*

---

Tuesday April 4, 2006

### **Increase in groundwater arsenic levels detected in Gwelup area**

The Department of Environment is advising Gwelup residents to have their groundwater bores privately tested after detecting an increase in the area's groundwater arsenic levels.

The advice mainly relates to bores in the area bordered by Balcatta Road, North Beach Road, Karrinyup Road, Odin Road, Mitchell Freeway, Erindale Road and Lakes Gwelup and Karrinyup (see attached map).

DoE Land and Water Quality manager Sharon Clark said the levels were similar to those identified in the Stirling area last year and were above the guideline levels set for drinking water and irrigation.

Ms Clark said DoE was working closely with the Department of Health and the City of Stirling to monitor the groundwater quality and would continue to keep residents informed about any significant changes.

"We're sending information to potentially affected properties about the impact of arsenic in groundwater bores and how to go about getting their bore water tested should they wish to," she said.

"We're recommending that people avoid using their bores until it's confirmed that the groundwater is safe."

Arsenic is a naturally occurring metal that can cause health effects with prolonged exposure.

Department of Health Environmental Health director Jim Dodds advised people against using untested bore water.

"Bore water should never be used for drinking, bathing, filling swimming and paddling pools, food preparation or cooking unless it has been professionally tested and treated," he said.

"We are also advising people to wash their fruit and vegetables if they use bore water to irrigate them."

It is believed a number of factors have contributed to the rise in the area's groundwater arsenic levels but Ms Clark said it was most likely due to changes caused by low rainfall and high abstraction rates of groundwater in the area.

She said it was anticipated that arsenic concentrations would gradually decrease but said it could take years for them to return to natural levels.

"For this reason, we're also advising residents to regularly monitor their bores and minimise their bore water use.

"This is in keeping with the Water Corporation's *Waterwise* strategies and will help to keep the water table as high as possible."

**Ends release.**

**Media Contact:** Media liaison officer Genine Johnson 6364 6499.