

# PLUMBING STANDARDS CRUCIAL AFTER LEGIONELLA SCARE

BY ESTHER RIVERS / © 06/03/2019 /

Adelaide bathrooms may be privy to legionella, a potentially deadly bacteria. Flinders University in Adelaide has discovered that one in four homes tested positively to harbouring the bacteria in the showers or bathroom area. Industry experts say that plumbing standards are of the utmost importance with bacteria like this, to ensure people's health and well being.

Researchers at Flinders Uni took samples of water from the showers in a range of 68 newer and older Adelaide households with three out of the four testing positive to legionella – a harmful bacteria that can cause Legionnaires disease.

Legionnaires disease is a severe pneumonia-like infection that can be especially dangerous for elderly and those with weakened immune systems. According to the national industry body Master Plumbers Australia (MPA), state and federal governments need to urgently enforce plumbing regulations to ensure the highest standards of public health are maintained.

“Our national industry body is calling for government to enforce regulators to mandatory test for legionella in all new and existing buildings including homes, apartments, schools and hospitals,” chair of MPA Robert Pearshouse says.

“Plumbing regulations vary slightly from state to state uniform legionella-based legislation needs to be introduced to ensure the highest standards of public safety are maintained. Anyone connecting fixtures to water or sewerage systems, or dealing with systems requiring heat regulation, must be appropriately licensed to carry out the work. As well as mandatory inspections, there should be nationally consistent and regulated maintenance programs put in place.”

“As the Australian and New Zealand population continues to grow and we move towards higher density living, adequate resourcing is needed to ensure high standards are enforced and maintained,” Robert says.

“Without it, the chances of legionnaires or other diseases increase significantly. The reason for strict regulation of the Australian and New Zealand plumbing industry is to ensure the health and safety of the public is maintained to the level we have come to expect in Australia and New Zealand. It wasn't long ago that people battled diseases which are now considered mostly eradicated, the likes of typhoid, dysentery and cholera. Diseases such as these are prevented by the safety provided by correctly installed and maintained plumbing and drainage systems.”

“With effective controls we can eradicate other waterborne diseases such as legionnaires but to do so we can't let standards slip or go uncontrolled,” Robert says.

MPA would welcome the opportunity to work with the government to try and reach a positive outcome providing safe hot water to Australian and New Zealand homes, businesses and communities.

Effective plumbing services are critical for maintaining and enhancing community health as well as protecting the environment.