



Provision of drinking water fountains in public areas

A local government action guide

To promote and encourage people to drink more water, free tap water should be accessible, appealing and available in key settings where Victorians live, learn, work and play.

Councils can enhance public drinking water facilities through the supply, access to and promotion of water fountains across a range of settings, including sports and recreation centres, commercial/retail areas, playgrounds, walking trails, schools, workplaces, open spaces and transport hubs.

VicHealth commissioned research to evaluate the access to and supply of water in a variety of settings, such as open spaces and sports and recreation centres (VicHealth 2014). This guide is based on the research findings and a review of drinking water fountains.

Water fountains are provided by local governments for:

- public convenience
- health and wellbeing
- environmental sustainability.

The following guidelines for water fountains suggest best practice principles for:

1. installation and replacement
2. maintenance
3. promotion.

1

Installation and replacement



Consider location

- Map out locations of existing water fountains and identify opportunities for installation of new water fountains/refill stations (see Appendix 1 for water fountain designs)
- Research indicates that if drinking water sources are not in prominent areas and blend in with surroundings, they are less likely to be used. (VicHealth 2015a).
- Units in poor locations or not installed on appropriate (flat) surfaces can make it difficult to access the water source.

For new installation sites, identify:

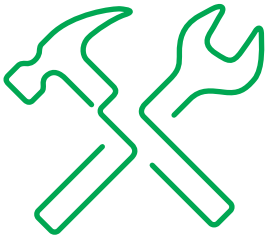
- high pedestrian traffic areas, such as next to a playground
- open spaces where there are opportunities to do physical activity
- open spaces where there are planned picnic tables/BBQ facilities.

Presence of a water bottle refill station

- Water refill stations are the preferred way of accessing water over drinking fountains or bottled water for many people. It is often perceived that water bottle refill stations are cleaner and more hygienic than fountains or bubblers with drinking spout only (VicHealth 2015b).
- Vertical flow of water makes it easier to refill water bottles.
- Flow meter gauges can be installed to monitor usage.

2

Maintenance



Develop and maintain an Assets Surveillance Schedule

- Document an annual water fountain maintenance plan.
- Review the drainage of the water fountains.
- Carry out regular maintenance of water fountains including taps, spouts and overall unit and any signage.

Review water quality

- Water temperature should be monitored, as water that is cooled or cold is more likely to be consumed (VicHealth 2015a).
- Filtered water stations should be considered in local areas where taste is considered a major barrier to drinking tap water.

Cleanliness and appearance

- Cleanliness is an important aspect of perceived hygiene.
- Promote hygienic fountains by displaying information on cleaning schedules or support for maintenance on or near the fountain.

Frequency of vandalism

- Certain models of water fountains are less susceptible to vandalism. Vandalised water fountains are less likely to be used (VicHealth 2014).
- Materials that are resistant to graffiti, such as non-reflective and heavy duty stainless steel, can be easily cleaned, yet still recognisable in the street.

Function of the water drainage system

- Good drainage systems should adequately capture waste water.
- Ensure that the immediate ground level at the base of the drinking fountain has a reverse fall to eliminate excess spillage running along footpaths.
- Water fountains should be installed near gardens where possible, so excess run-off can be used to water plants.
- Water fountains with excess spillage or absent drainage can give negative impressions of wasted water and lack of maintenance. They can also be unappealing if the area becomes muddy due to excess water spillage.

3

Promotion



Promotion of water fountains can play an integral role in encouraging tap water consumption in the community. When people are aware of the water fountains, water consumption increases (VicHealth 2016).

Promote water fountains in general areas and also as part of special/community events.

Provide clear and visible signage that:

- indicates the location of the water fountain
- indicates where a water bottle refill facility is part of the drinking fountain
- has contact details for the public to report any faults or hygiene concerns
- includes relevant logos such as Council and water companies
- promotes consistent health messages about drinking tap water.

✔ Checklist for installing, replacing and promoting drinking water fountains

Water bottle refill station

- Select easy-to-use water bottle refill stations such as those with a platform that the bottle could be placed on.
- Ensure there is an indicator highlighting that water bottles can be refilled.
- Ensure the visibility of the water bottle refill station with proper signage.
- Install in high pedestrian traffic areas.
- Install flow meter gauges.

Susceptibility to vandalism

- Ensure the drinking water fountain can be easily cleaned.

Hygiene

- Ensure the water fountain is maintained for hygiene.
- Display information on cleaning schedules or support for maintenance on or near the fountain.
- Consider water bottle refill station.
- Include the capacity for adding a dog bowl in the design of drinking water fountains in parks and open spaces.

Quality of water

- Review and monitor clarity, odour and temperature of water.
- Replace filters on water stations if required.

Promotion

- Provide clear instructions for usage.
- Clearly show where to place a water bottle for refilling.
- Use signage or footpath markings to direct people to the water fountain.
- Incorporate logos from local government and water companies.
- Include prominent messages to promote tap water consumption from water fountains.
- Ensure the water fountain can be easily recognised.

Easily accessible

- Consider wheelchair access and height of bubblers for smaller children. A step may improve access to water fountains for young children.
- Ensure water fountains are available and promoted in relevant settings.

Appendix 1: Evaluation of water refill stations

	Option 1 Retrofitting	Option 2 Aquaflil Type B	Option 3 Aquaflil Type C	Option 4 A Frame	Option 5 Appollo280	Option 6 Arqua DF4&7	Option 7 AquaBubbler	Option 8 ProAcqua WS
ACCESSIBLE								
A.S. 1428 compliant	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐
Unit accessible	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐
Allows for single hand refill	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	●	●
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO VANDALISM								
Vandal proof	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Finish and robustness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Simplicity of fixing options	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	◐
WATER ACCESS*								
Bottle & mouth facilities	◐	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐
Ease of drainage	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●
Fitter available	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	●
Chilled water option	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●
DESIGN*								
Ease of use	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐	●
Practicality of size	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐
Aesthetics	●	◐	●	◐	●	●	●	◐
Presence	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●
HYGIENE								
Hygiene	◐	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	●
Perception of hygiene	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	●
BRANDING*								
Opportunity for permanent branding	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●
Opportunity for temporary branding	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●
TOTAL	14	18	20.5	22	22.5	17	17.5	20

Source: VicHealth 2014 *Water refill stations informing Prototypes* (unpublished report)

- Yes, meets the criteria (1)
- ◐ Yes, somewhat meets the criteria (0.5)
- ◐ Does not meet the criteria (0)

Units were evaluated on accessibility, susceptibility to vandalism, water access, design, hygiene and branding.

*Water access, design and branding scores were weighted double with the maximum total score for each unit being 28 given the importance of these categories.

References

- Hopcraft, M, & Cochrane, N 2013, *Strategies to increase water consumption in the promotion of optimal nutrition and dental health*, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
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- VicHealth 2015a, *Investigation of water access in specific settings* (unpublished report).
- VicHealth 2015b, *Evaluating the use of water fountains and water refill stations in the City of Melbourne* (unpublished report).
- VicHealth 2016, *Water fountain campaign evaluation in the City of Melbourne* (unpublished report).



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