AUSTRALIAN WATER ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL WATER WEEK

Water is Life

National Water Week Quiz 2026

Workplace Questions

A National Water Week quiz bringing colleagues together to explore the water connections all around us.

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What is the condition linked to dangerously low blood sodium, sometimes caused by drinking too much water?

A. Aquanimietas
B. Hyponatraemia
C. Aquatoxosis
D. Hydrobalancia

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A café tips mop water into the street gutter. Which water system is most likely affected first?

A. Drinking water supply
B. Groundwater by default
C. Stormwater
D. Recycled water

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Which sector currently consumes the most water in Australia?

A. Mining
B. Manufacturing
C. Data centres and digital technology
D. Agriculture

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Which statement about First Peoples water ownership in Australia is most accurate?

A. First Peoples own and control less than 0.2% of Australia’s surface water entitlements
B. First Peoples own most Australian water licences
C. Cultural water is only symbolic and has no practical role
D. Water ownership is unrelated to water reform

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Roughly how many people work in Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Services in Australia?

A. 4,200
B. 14,200
C. 42,200
D. 142,000

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Which statement about purified recycled water is most accurate?

A. It is only suitable for gardens and never for supply systems
B. It can be highly treated and monitored for specific uses, including drinking water in some schemes
C. It needs less testing because it has already been used once
D. It is a completely new idea with no international examples

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In Australian water reform, which description of governance is closest to reality?

A. The Commonwealth runs every local water service directly
B. Local councils alone decide national water policy
C. Water reform is managed only through emergency drought rules
D. States and territories manage much water planning, within national agreements and Basin-specific arrangements

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Which list best reflects the different water supplies used across Australia?

A. Surface water, groundwater, desalinated water, recycled water, rainwater and stormwater used fit-for-purpose
B. Mostly dams and rivers, with groundwater used only as an emergency back-up
C. Rainwater tanks in regional areas, desalination in cities, and recycled water for farms
D. One main source in each state, chosen by government and used for all purposes

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Which of these is estimated to have the largest global average water footprint?

A. A 200 g beef steak
B. A 200 g block of chocolate
C. A 200 g serve of tomatoes
D. One cup of coffee

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Why should water be considered early when planning new AI data centres?

A. Their water demand is usually small nationally, so it matters only if a drought has already begun
B. Some cooling systems need secure water supplies and can affect communities, ecosystems and existing users
C. More efficient servers reduce electricity use, so separate water planning is generally unnecessary
D. Water supply can be addressed after approval, provided the developer funds any required infrastructure

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Which items should generally be flushed in a toilet?

A. Anything labelled ‘flushable’
B. Food scraps, tissues and hair
C. Pee, poo and toilet paper
D. Wipes, cotton buds and dental floss

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Which everyday product has a hidden water footprint before it reaches the user?

A. A cotton T-shirt
B. A smartphone
C. A loaf of bread
D. All of these

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Why can the same community need to plan for both floods and droughts?

A. Floods refill every storage perfectly, so drought planning becomes unnecessary
B. Droughts only happen inland and floods only happen on the coast
C. Climate variability can bring periods of too much water and too little water to the same place
D. Flood planning and water security planning are completely separate jobs

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Which option best explains the difference between water treatment and wastewater treatment?

A. Water treatment makes seawater only; wastewater treatment makes rain
B. Water treatment prepares water for use; wastewater treatment cleans used water before reuse or return to the environment
C. They are the same process with different names
D. Water treatment happens in stormwater drains; wastewater treatment cleans used water from homes and businesses

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A region is planning data centres, housing, agriculture, manufacturing and energy projects. Which approach best supports long-term water security?

A. Assess each project separately against the water available when its application is lodged
B. Prioritise developments with the strongest economic benefits, then expand water infrastructure as demand grows
C. Set aside water for households and ecosystems first, then allocate any remaining supply to new developments
D. Assess combined demand, water sources, infrastructure capacity, drought risk and impacts on existing users and ecosystems

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Answer: B. Hyponatraemia

Hyponatraemia means the sodium level in the blood is too low. Drinking excessive amounts of water can dilute sodium, although it is only one possible cause. Hydration is important, but biology remains annoyingly fond of balance.

Discuss:

Why might ‘drink more water’ still need context?

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Answer: C. Stormwater

Street gutters usually connect to stormwater systems, which may flow to local waterways. Sewerage systems carry wastewater from toilets, sinks, showers and laundries to treatment plants.

Discuss:

Why do people so often confuse stormwater and sewerage?

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Answer: D. Agriculture

Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for about 68.3% of Australia's total water consumption in 2023–24. Data centres are not reported separately in national water accounts, but can still create significant local water demand.

Discuss:

Why can a smaller national water user still create major local pressure?

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Answer: A. First Peoples own and control less than 0.2% of Australia’s surface water entitlements

The Australian Government states that First Peoples own and control less than 0.2% of Australia’s surface water entitlements. This is one reason water reform is closely connected to rights, access, governance and justice.

Discuss:

What is the difference between consultation and genuine shared decision-making?

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Answer: C. 42,200

Jobs and Skills Australia estimates around 42,200 workers in Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Services as at February 2026. That covers essential services many people rarely see until something goes wrong.

Discuss:

Which water jobs are most visible to the public, and which are hidden?

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Answer: B. It can be highly treated and monitored for specific uses, including drinking water in some schemes

Purified recycled water uses advanced treatment and monitoring. Suitability depends on the treatment train, regulations, scheme design and public trust. Technology matters, but so do governance and communication.

Discuss:

What would you want to know before supporting a purified recycled water scheme?

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Answer: D. States and territories manage much water planning, within national agreements and Basin-specific arrangements

Water governance is shared and layered. States and territories have major roles in water planning and management, while national agreements, Commonwealth responsibilities and Murray–Darling Basin arrangements shape reform in important ways.

Discuss:

Why can shared governance make water reform slower but more durable?

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Answer: A. Surface water, groundwater, desalinated water, recycled water, rainwater and stormwater used fit-for-purpose

Australia uses a mix of sources depending on location, climate, infrastructure and purpose. Surface water and groundwater are critical, while desalination, recycled water, rainwater and stormwater can support resilience where appropriate.

Discuss:

Which sources are used where you live or work?

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Answer: B. A 200 g block of chocolate

Using global-average estimates, producing 200 g of chocolate can have a water footprint of roughly 3,400 litres, compared with about 3,100 litres for 200 g of beef, around 140 litres for a cup of coffee and about 40 litres for 200 g of tomatoes. Actual footprints vary by place and production method.

Discuss:

Should water footprints change what we buy, or how products are produced?

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Answer: B. Some cooling systems need secure water supplies and can affect communities, ecosystems and existing users

AI data centres generate substantial heat. Some cooling technologies can use significant volumes of water, while others use less water but may require more energy. Early planning allows assessment of local supply, drought resilience, environmental needs, infrastructure and opportunities to use recycled or other non-drinking water.

Discuss:

What water information should a data centre developer provide before approval?

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Answer: C. Pee, poo and toilet paper

Toilets are designed for pee, poo and toilet paper. Toilet paper is made to break down quickly in water and move through the sewerage system.

Tissues, paper towel and wipes are made to stay stronger when wet. Even products labelled “flushable” may not break down quickly enough and can combine with fats, oils and other materials to block household pipes, pumps and sewerage infrastructure.

Discuss:

Why might the word “flushable” give people the wrong impression?

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Answer: D. All of these

Water is used throughout the supply chains of everyday products. It is needed to grow cotton and food, extract and process raw materials, manufacture components, clean equipment and generate energy.

This water use may occur far from where the final product is purchased or used. Direct household water use is therefore only one part of a person's overall water footprint.

Discuss:

Which product surprised you most, and where might water be used in making it?

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Answer: C. Climate variability can bring periods of too much water and too little water to the same place

A community can face intense rainfall and flooding in one period, then long dry conditions and supply stress in another. Good water planning connects drainage, storage, waterway health, emergency management and climate resilience.

Discuss:

What kind of project could help with both flood risk and water security?

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Answer: B. Water treatment prepares water for use; wastewater treatment cleans used water before reuse or return to the environment

Water treatment prepares source water for a particular use, most commonly drinking. Wastewater treatment cleans used water from homes, workplaces and industry so it can be safely reused or returned to the environment.

Stormwater is different again. It is rainwater that runs off roofs, roads, car parks and other surfaces into drains. In most places, stormwater is not treated at a conventional treatment plant before reaching creeks, rivers, wetlands or the ocean. It can carry litter, oil, sediment, fertiliser, chemicals and animal waste with it.

Some systems use wetlands, gross pollutant traps or other infrastructure to improve stormwater quality, but people should not assume that everything entering a street drain will be removed before it reaches a waterway.

Discuss:

How might people behave differently if they understood that street drains can lead directly to local waterways?

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Answer: D. Assess combined demand, water sources, infrastructure capacity, drought risk and impacts on existing users and ecosystems

Looking at projects individually can miss cumulative pressure. Early, integrated planning helps identify supply limits, environmental and cultural water needs, infrastructure requirements, drought resilience, equity impacts and opportunities for efficiency, recycling and alternative supplies.

Discuss:

What information should every major development provide about its future water demand?

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART!

Thank you for bringing people together to test your water knowledge and celebrate National Water Week.

Held annually in October, National Water Week encourages people across Australia to learn more about the value of water and the systems, people and places that help keep it safe, reliable and sustainable.

The quiz may be finished, but the conversation does not have to stop. Keep exploring where your water comes from, where it goes after you use it, and how water connects our communities, environment, culture and economy.

Discover more National Water Week activities and resources at:
https://www.nationalwaterweek.org

WE'D LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK

Tell us how you used the quiz, what your group learned and which questions prompted the most discussion.

Email: nationalwaterweek@awa.asn.au

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