

1998

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 1928

**PUBLIC HEALTH (INFECTIOUS AND NOTIFIABLE DISEASES)
REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT)**

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Circulated by authority of
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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 1928

PUBLIC HEALTH (INFECTIOUS AND NOTIFIABLE DISEASES) REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT)

Outline

The *Public Health (Infectious and Notifiable Diseases) Regulations (Amendment)* amends Schedule 3 of the Regulations by adding Cryptosporidiosis to the list of Infectious Diseases. The amendment would require medical practitioners, pathologists and hospitals notify the Medical Officer of Health of cases of Cryptosporidiosis. The amendment would also allow the Medical Officer of Health to utilize the various powers in the *Public Health (Infectious and Notifiable Diseases) Regulations* in order to assist in controlling of the spread of this disease.

Commencement

The Amendment would commence on the day it is notified in the Gazette.

Background

The ACT is currently experiencing an outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis. ACT pathologies notified the Department of Health and Community Care of a significant increase in Cryptosporidiosis in late January. Sixty-five cases were reported between 8 January and 4 February, with more than half the cases reporting onset dates of late January. By comparison, South Australia with a population of 1.5 million has 50 to 100 cases of Cryptosporidiosis reported per year.

Cryptosporidiosis is an infection caused by the minute protozoan parasite, *Cryptosporidium*, which infects the intestine. The symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of appetite, stomach pain, headache and low-grade fever. Asymptomatic infections are common. The disease may be severe and prolonged in people whose immune system is not functioning normally, especially people with HIV infection. There is no known specific treatment for Cryptosporidiosis.

Cryptosporidium oocysts are highly resistant to the various chemicals (including chlorine) used to disinfect drinking water. Outbreaks of Cryptosporidiosis through town water supplies and swimming pools have been well documented in scientific journals. Often contamination of the environment, rivers and dams occurs through farm animals, particularly cattle.

Animal to person spread from household pets and farm animals is common. Person to person spread via the faecal oral route is also common.

Cryptosporidiosis has been notifiable in New South Wales since December 1996. It is also notifiable in South Australia, Western Australia.

Application

Basically, the Amendment provides:

- (a) for the notification of Cryptosporidiosis by medical practitioners, pathologists and hospitals; and
- (b) the Medical Officer of Health with powers to investigate cases of Cryptosporidiosis and take any necessary public health actions to prevent its spread.