



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# **DRAFT Public health guideline for the hairdressing and barber industry**

JANUARY 2016



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## Aim

This guideline aims to provide infection prevention and control standards for businesses performing hairdressing procedures. Where other services such as body piercing, beauty therapy or other types of personal appearance services involving skin penetration are provided, refer to the *Health (Skin Penetration Procedures) Regulations 1998* and the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures 1998.

## Introduction

Transmission of blood-borne viruses and infections is considered to be low risk in the hairdressing industry. However, it is still important that a hairdresser or barber consistently follow good hygiene practices to prevent the possible transmission of infection to their clients.

This guide can be used to support the development of business policies, procedures and protocols that help to demonstrate compliance with sound infection prevention and control principles.

## Public health risks

Although the risks are minimal, a range of procedures performed by the hairdressing industry may potentially expose clients and the hairdresser to infections if precautions are not taken.

Types of infections may include:

- **Bacterial** such as *Staphylococcus aureus* (Golden staph or MRSA)
- **Viral** such as herpes, HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C
- **Fungal** such as *Candida albicans* infections
- **Infestations** such as head lice, scabies

A hairdresser should examine the steps of a procedure or treatment, and identify what risks are involved and know how to best prevent those risks.

Accidentally nicking or cutting a client, who has a blood-borne virus (such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C), with scissors, may put the next client or the hairdresser at risk if appropriate measures are not taken.

A person with a blood-borne virus does not have to disclose that they have the disease to a hairdresser.

There are many people in the community who are unaware that they have a blood-borne virus or other type of infection. Therefore, it must be assumed that all blood and body fluids are potentially infectious and therefore standard precautions must be applied to prevent the transmission of infections.

The hairdressing industry should be informed of diseases that can be transmitted in the course of their work and should develop their protocols /standards in response to this information. If you want to know more about a particular disease or infection, refer to the WA Department of Health website, [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au), for a range of fact sheets that explain how each disease is transmitted, symptoms and common health care advice. It is recommended that

hairdressers familiarise themselves with at least basic information about blood-borne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

## Infection prevention and control

It is the responsibility of the business owner or supervisors to ensure all employees who perform hairdressing procedures have an understanding of how infections are spread, and how they can prevent the spread of infection by adopting and using the recommended standards.

Staff and supervisors must be able to do their work in ways that ensure a business performs safe and hygienic procedures.

Staff and supervisors must know about issues associated with infection control, cleaning and disinfection relevant to the business activities and the jobs they do.

The business owner or manager should ensure every hairdresser has infection control and prevention skills and knowledge.

## Other agencies requirements

People working in the hairdressing industries must be aware of other agencies that may have a regulatory or advisory role related to the industries.

Some agencies to be aware of include:

**WorkSafe WA**- [www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/)

WorkSafe is a division of the Department of Commerce, the WA State Government agency responsible for the administration of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*.

The principal objective of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* is to promote and secure the safety and health of persons in the workplace. WorkSafe has numerous resources aimed at the body art and personal appearance industries.

**Therapeutic Goods Administration** - [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au)

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is part of the [Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing](#), and is responsible for regulating therapeutic goods including medicines, medical devices, blood and blood products.

This includes goods such as:

- sunscreens
- complementary medicines such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, aromatherapy and homeopathic drugs
- medicines and poisons (including Botox)
- chemicals and disinfectants

Essentially, any product for which therapeutic claims are made, must be listed, registered or included in the [Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods \(ARTG\)](#) before it can be supplied in Australia.

The TGA administers the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*. This legislation provides a framework for a risk management approach that allows the Australian community to have timely access to therapeutic goods which are consistently safe, effective and of high quality.

The TGA works with consumers, health professionals, industry and its international counterparts in order to effectively regulate increasingly complex products resulting from rapid scientific developments.

**National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) - [www.nicnas.gov.au](http://www.nicnas.gov.au)**

NICNAS aids in the protection of the Australian people and the environment by assessing the risks of industrial chemicals and providing information to promote their safe use.

**Retail and Personal Services Training Council (RAPSTC) - <http://rapstc.com.au>**

The role of the Retail and Personal Services Training Council (RAPS Training Council) is to serve the Retail, Community Pharmacy, Hairdressing, Floristry, Beauty Therapy and Funeral Services industry sectors in relation to Vocational Education and Training.

## Standards for premises

Careful planning is required before setting up a hairdressing business. It is important that the premise is fitted out with appropriate furniture and fittings, and designed to reduce the spread of infections and minimise hazards.

### General premises design

#### The business premises should:

- have enough space for the equipment and the work that they do
- be protected from pests and other contaminants such as dirt and fumes
- be easy to clean and keep clean
- have enough clean water available at the right temperature for the work to be done
- have a disposal system for garbage, sewage and waste water
- have sufficient lighting and ventilation
- have sufficient bench space for preparation work
- ensure client treatment areas are not used for food preparation
- have a system for sharps waste (if applicable)
- have adequate equipment to undertake the procedures carried out by the business

#### Business fixtures, fittings and equipment must be:

- made of suitable material appropriate for the work of the business
- suitable for the jobs they are used for
- easy to clean and, if necessary, disinfect; and

#### The business should make sure that they have:

- access to toilets and hand washbasins

- separate sinks for washing instruments / equipment and hair washing
- storage areas for personal belongings and clothing, and for storing office equipment and papers and any chemicals used by the business.

### **Hand wash basins**

A hand wash basin should be located in the main salon area in an accessible location to promote use by staff. The basin should be supplied with hot and cold water through a single outlet, ideally with a hands free tap.

Hair washing basins with hot and cold running water through a single outlet are suitable for washing hands while the basin is not in use.

### **Hair washing basins**

The number of hair washing basins to be provided in a salon is at the discretion of the business owner, based on the demand for their business.

### **Equipment sinks**

A separate sink with hot and cold running water should be available for cleaning instruments and equipment washing. Hair washing basins should not be used for washing equipment.

Sink sizes should be large enough to allow immersion of the largest appliance/equipment to be cleaned.



### **Food preparation**

The preparation of food is prohibited in areas where preparation (e.g. mixing dyes), cleaning or procedures (e.g. hair cutting) are undertaken.

Where a hairdresser wants to offer clients a drink such as water, tea or coffee, it is important that drinks are prepared in an area separate from where the client's hair is cut or equipment is cleaned, such as the staff tea room. This is to prevent potential contamination with chemicals or inappropriate use of utensils.

## Hygiene

Personal hygiene and preventing the spread of infection is the responsibility of everybody working in the hairdressing and barber industry.

Knowing how and when to apply standard hygiene precautions is critical for any successful business.

Safe and hygienic work practices need to be applied to every client because some people may not be aware that they have an infection or a blood borne virus, and they are not obliged to disclose such information to a hairdresser.

Successful infection prevention and control involves:

- Good personal hygiene practices, including tying long hair back, trimming nails, clean clothing and the wearing waterproof coverings on cuts and abrasions
- Washing and drying hands before and after client contact
- The use of protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, plastic aprons, masks etc.
- Appropriate handling and disposal of sharps, e.g. razors
- Use of single use equipment when applicable and
- Appropriate processing of re-usable equipment and instruments.

### Hand hygiene and hand washing

Hand hygiene is the most important step in preventing the spread of infection from one person to another.

Hands can become contaminated through contact with a client, the environment or other workers.

As a general rule, a hairdresser should wash their hands:

- Before and after contact with each client or after any interruptions in a procedure
- After eating or smoking, or answering the phone
- After going to the toilet
- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling laundry or waste
- After contact with blood or other bodily substances
- When hands become visibly contaminated.

Important steps to follow when hand washing include:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water
- Hands should be rubbed together for a minimum of 15 seconds so that the cleaning solution (soap) comes into contact with all surfaces of the hands, paying particular attention to the fingertips, thumbs and the areas between the fingers
- Hands should be rinsed then patted dry using disposable paper towels or a hot air dryer
- Paper towels, soap and a waste receptacle should be located next to the hand basin

- Scrubbing brushes are not recommended for scrubbing hands as they can cause damaged to the skin

## **What to use for hand washing**

### **Soap (general hand washing)**

For general hand washing, plain soap or liquid soap is sufficient.

### **Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs)**

ABHR can be used for general hand washing in conjunction with soap and water e.g. use an ABHR in between client contacts

ABHRs may also be used on hands that are already visibly clean.

The active ingredient in ABHRs varies and may include ethanol or isopropanol. A product with at least 70% alcohol (isopropanol) is the most effective.

When selecting an ABHR, the product must have Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approval as a hand hygiene product and meet the EN1500 testing standard for bactericidal effectiveness.

**It is important that the products are used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.**

Please note the Department of Health does not promote specific products, nor do they mandate product selection.





## **Other aspects of hand hygiene**

### **Cuts and abrasions**

As intact skin is a natural defence against infection, cuts or breaks in the skin or the presence of skin lesions are possible points of entry for infectious organisms. If these are infected they can be a possible source of transmission of infectious organisms.

To reduce the risk of cross-transmission of infectious organisms, cuts and abrasions should be covered with waterproof dressings, or the hairdresser must not perform the procedure until the wound is treated. Alternatively gloves may be used.

### **Wounds and infections on client**

If a client has an open wound or infection, open sores or abrasions, or the hairdresser does not feel comfortable providing a service to a client due to a skin condition, the hairdresser should recommend they consult their general practitioner and have the condition treated before they return.

Alternatively the hairdresser may elect to provide a service to a client, even if they have a skin abrasion or infection, if they believe they can appropriately provide the service around the condition.

### **Personal protection**

Personal protection is used to protect both the client and hairdresser by providing a physical barrier to infections caused by dirt, blood and excretions.

Protection includes:

- Washable aprons
- disposable gloves
- surgical masks
- protective eyewear goggles

When choosing the right protective clothing/equipment consider:

- the likelihood of being exposed to dirt, blood or excretions
- ways that a worker could be exposed?

Protective clothing/equipment must be made available for staff and training should be provided on ways to prevent transmission of infection and cleaning of equipment.

### **Management of head lice (nits)**

Head lice are tiny insect parasites that live on the head and feed on the scalp (the skin covering your head). They reproduce by laying their eggs (nits) on the hair shaft (the part of your hair closest to the scalp). Head lice are not dangerous, do not carry diseases, and are not a sign of poor hygiene (cleanliness).

### **How do people get head lice?**

Head lice are spread by head-to-head contact with another person who has head lice. This kind of contact includes doing group work at school, playing, or hugging.

Head lice can run from one head to another in seconds. Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but they can sometimes swing from one hair to another.

Head lice are not spread through bed linen, clothing or head gear (hats and helmets) as they do not leave the scalp unless they are moving to another scalp, unless they are dead or dying.

### **Signs and symptoms**

A hairdresser may be able to see head lice crawling in a client's hair, although they can be difficult to spot as they move quickly.

- Adult lice are usually dark brown and about 2 to 3 mm long.
- Hatchlings (young lice) are often a lighter brown colour and about 1 to 2 mm long.
- Eggs will be attached to the hair shaft. They can be very tiny and hard to see, especially newly-laid eggs close to the scalp. They are grey-white and about the size of a grain of salt.

#### **Managing**

### **Managing a client who has head lice**

There is no regulation preventing a person who has head lice from using or attending a hairdressing salon.

Head lice are not considered a physical threat to staff or others if recommended practice standards are used. However, hairdressers are within their rights to refuse service as long as it is not on racial or ethnic grounds under the *Equal Opportunities Act*. Therefore a hairdresser is not committing an offence against this Act by refusing to perform a hairdressing service on a person with head lice.

Hairdressers should not be alarmed when faced with a case of head lice. It is important that the business owner develops their own policies and procedures on how to manage a client who presents with head lice.

Consider the following options for managing head lice:

- Should head lice be identified in a client, sensitively advise the client on appropriate treatments and offer options based on the extent of head infestation
- Cut the clients hair and take additional precautions to prevent the spread of head lice to yourself and other clients. Precautions may include containing the hair in the cape used on the client. On completion of the haircut, fold the cape inwards and roll into a ball to contain any shed lice and take the cape to the cleaning area to dispose of the hair in a disposable rubbish bag. Clean equipment used on that client. Wash hands.
- Alternatively, decline to cut the clients hair until they have treated their head lice. It is recommended the client is referred to the Department of Health's website for information on methods to treat their hair, or keep up to date brochures to provide to the client. It may be pertinent for the hairdresser to keep this information on hand to present to a client:  
[www.healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)

### **Treating brushes, combs and scissors**

The treatment for equipment used on clients with head lice is no different than the treatment of equipment used on clients without lice. This is because infections and infestations are not

always detectable; therefore the equipment should always be treated as though a client has an infection.

It is important that any brushes, scissors or combs are cleaned and disinfected in hot water. Head lice are fragile insects, easily killed by water temperatures greater than 60°C for a minimum of 30 seconds (however this temperature is too hot for washing hair).

### **Other cleaning**

All hair should be swept up and placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in the rubbish bin. The disinfection, fumigation and cleaning of floors and walls is **not** necessary. Wash any capes used to capture hair in a standard laundering cycle.

### **Animals**

Animals, other than assistance animals, should not be allowed in areas where procedures are being undertaken. Having animals in the premises should be discouraged.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited in workplaces by regulation 3(44)(b) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996*.

### **Linen / towels / disposable sheets**

Disposable paper towels, capes, or clean linen are recommended where appropriate, and must be changed for each client.

Used / soiled linen, towels and protective clothing must be laundered using hot water (>60°C) and detergent. Domestic laundering is sufficient, and washing may be taken offsite for laundering.

If linen or towels are stained with blood then those items must be washed in cold or cool water no more than 35°C (hot water will set blood stains). When the stains are removed the linen can then be processed as above.

All clean linen, towels and clothing must be stored in a clean area to reduce contamination.

### **Pump bottles / bulk products**

Pump outlets, bottles and nozzles are a potential source of contamination, particularly due to the build-up of contents around the outlet. Nozzles should be cleaned frequently and dried before being replaced. Wash bottles and nozzles in warm water and detergent, rinse them under hot running water, and dry them using a lint-free cloth, before refilling the bottle or replacing the pump/spray nozzle. Pump/spray bottles must never be topped up.

### **Cleaning the premises**

Routine cleaning of work areas is important because deposits of dust, soil and viruses/bacteria on surfaces can transmit infection.

After each client, all chairs, couches, and benches where skin contact occurs should be washed with detergent and water. Hair should be regularly swept up between each client.

Products used for general cleaning must be suitable for the purpose and the types of products used are at the discretion of the premises. As a general rule, detergent and water are all that is required for general cleaning. Chemical disinfectants are not recommended for routine cleaning.

## Blood or body fluid spills clean-up

It is important for an owner to establish procedures for responding to a client where the skin has been cut and bleeding has occurred (e.g. with scissors), and ensure staff know how to manage this e.g. apply pressure with a clean tissue then apply a plaster. Clean up any blood spill on chair surfaces or equipment as soon as possible, wash area thoroughly and leave to dry.

### **For blood spills:**

- spots or drops of blood or other small spills can easily be managed by wearing gloves and wiping the area immediately with paper towelling
- then clean the area with detergent and lukewarm water
- place any bloodied materials in two plastic bags, one inside the other (including the gloves used for cleaning) and discard into domestic waste
- wash hands after removing gloves.
- where cleaning is difficult such as between tiles and there is a possibility of bare skin contact with that surface, then a disinfectant (such as bleach) may be used after the surface has been cleaned with detergent and water.

## Single use instruments

### **Cut throat razors**

Cut throat razors, also known as straight razors, have a flick blade that folds back into the razor handle.

Cut throat razors with a non-changeable blade are not permitted for use in any commercial hairdressing establishment in Western Australia due to the risk of spreading blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. This is a requirement under the *Health (Skin Penetration Procedures) Regulations 1998*.

After use, micro-organisms and small, invisible quantities of blood and bodily fluids can remain on the razor blade. Washing and disinfecting the blade will not destroy these micro-organisms and will place other clients at risk of infection if the blade is reused.

Cutthroat razors with disposable single use blades are permitted. A new disposable blade must be used for each client, and the detachable blade must be disposed of into a sharps container as per Australian Standard AS4031 after each use.

The blade handle must be cleaned with lukewarm water and detergent to remove any contaminants before a new single use blade is attached.

### **Disposable razors**

Disposable razors must be **single use only** and disposed of into a sharps container after use.

If razors have a detachable blade, the blade must be disposed of into a sharps container as per AS4031 after use.

The blade handle must be cleaned with lukewarm water and detergent to remove any contaminants prior to a new single use blade being attached.

## Cleaning and disinfecting instruments

Instruments used for different types of hairdressing procedures will require different levels of cleaning and disinfection depending on the level of risk of exposing a client to potential blood-borne viruses.

- **Cleaning** is the physical removal of dirt from instruments by washing in detergent and warm water to reduce the number of micro-organisms.
- **Disinfection** is the killing of disease causing micro-organisms except bacterial spores.

### Cleaning instruments

For majority of instruments used during a hairdressing procedure, scrubbing with warm water and detergent is sufficient.

Products used for cleaning instruments are at the discretion of the premises. As a general rule, detergent and water are all that is required. Chemical disinfectants are not recommended for cleaning instruments unless contaminated.

In general, when cleaning instruments:

1. Put on appropriate protection e.g. gloves, apron and goggles, where appropriate check manufacturer's advice or Material Safety Data Sheet for the chemicals you are using)
2. Dismantle or fully open items to ensure all parts are present
3. Rinse items in warm running water to remove particulates
4. Immerse items in the sink with warm water and detergent, and scrub items
5. Rinse items in warm to hot running water and dry
6. Inspect the item for cleanliness and completeness.

### Cleaning tips:

- Items that cannot be fully immersed should be wiped over using a lint-free cloth dampened in warm water and detergent, then rinsed and dried. A 70% ethanol alcohol solution should then be used to disinfect the item.

### Disinfecting instruments

Instruments that do not come into contact with blood or bodily fluids during normal use do not need to be disinfected. However, if an instrument such as scissors accidentally pierces nicks or cuts the skin it will need to be disinfected before being used on another client.

The use of disinfectants does not replace the need for good cleaning practices, and all equipment must be thoroughly cleaned before disinfection.

#### ***Thermal disinfection (hot / boiling water)***

Thermal disinfection uses heat or boiling water, which will destroy most organisms. It is the simplest and most efficient method of disinfecting instruments that can be immersed in water.

The simplest way is to heat the water in a kettle and immerse the instrument in hot / boiling water for approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Specific times and temperatures for optimal disinfection are outlined below:

Time	Temperature
2 mins	80°C
10 mins	75°C
15 mins	70°C

### **Chemical disinfection**

Chemical disinfection should only be used when thermal disinfection is unsuitable. This is because chemical disinfectants are commonly misused or overused, and many microorganisms are becoming resistant to them. However, disinfectants must be used when equipment or the environment is contaminated with blood or other body substances.

Only disinfectants specified in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) should be used: [www.tga.gov.au/australian-register-therapeutic-goods](http://www.tga.gov.au/australian-register-therapeutic-goods)

Solutions must be labelled appropriately (with the name, date and dilution strength), and must be used and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions.

### **Cleaning and disinfection table for common hairdressing equipment**

Instrument	Health risk	Control	How often
<b>HIGH RISK OF INFECTION</b>			
Razors (single use only)	All razors and blades are considered to be contaminated with blood, body fluids or substances and may spread skin infections or blood-borne viruses.	Must be single-use products and must be disposed of into a sharps container after each use.	Dispose of after each client
Cut throat razor blades (single use only)	All razors and blades are considered to be contaminated with blood, body fluids or substances and may spread skin infections or blood-borne viruses.	Must be single-use blades and must be disposed of into a sharps container after each use.	Dispose of after each client
Electric haircutting razors	Potential for skin infections. Where the blade comes into direct contact with the skin there is a risk of blood-borne virus transmission.	Clean and disinfect clipper guides. Dispose of blades that come into contact with the skin into sharps container. Wipe over razor body with a damp cloth containing detergent and water and an alcohol solution of 70%	Dispose of after each client

<b>MODERATE RISK OF INFECTION</b>			
Scissors / clippers	Potential for skin infections or blood-borne virus transmission.	Scrub clean in hot water and detergent. (If scissors cut the skin disinfect).	After each client
Capes and Wraps	May spread pediculosis (head lice infestation)	Wash in warm / hot water and detergent	After each client
Shaving brushes	Potential for spreading skin infections	Wash in warm / hot water and detergent. Dry thoroughly	After each client
<b>LOW RISK OF INFECTION</b>			
Equipment Trolley	Potential for contamination	Clean with warm water and detergent.	At least weekly
Combs, brushes, clips and rollers.	May spread pediculosis (head lice infestation) or other infections	Scrub clean in warm water and detergent.	After each client
Dye mixing bowls	Chemical contamination	Wash in warm water and detergent	After each use

## Waste management

### Disposal of general waste

General waste which includes used hair, tissues or gloves shall be:

- Disposed of into a lined waste bin with a tight fitting lid which is easily accessible during treatments
- Stored and disposed of via normal refuse collection

**Sharps such as razors must never be placed in general waste receptacles.**

### Disposal of sharps

The use of sharp devices exposes workers to the risk of injury and potential exposure to blood-borne infectious agents, including hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus and HIV.

Sharps include:

- Razors
- Blades and
- Anything capable of cutting or penetrating the skin.

Any person who has used a disposable sharp instrument or equipment must be responsible for its safe management and immediate disposal after use.

All used sharps shall be placed in a designated puncture resistant container that complies with the Australian Standard AS 4031:1992, 'Non reusable containers for the collection of sharp medical items used in health care areas'

Sharps containers shall be disposed of in accordance with the *Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004* using a licensed controlled waste carrier.

Contact the Department of Environment and Regulation for more information on sharps disposal.

## Mobile hairdressing requirements

Mobile operators are an important part of the industry but must not compromise their standards because they are not based at a permanent premise.

The following applies to mobile operators:

- A suitable treatment area must be selected. If the treatment area is dirty, cluttered or inappropriate (e.g. in the kitchen), the mobile operator should refuse to carry out any procedures.
- Mobile operators should have facilities to adequately store all clean and used equipment, linen and waste products safely in separate containers before and after use and while in transit.
- Any vehicle used to perform procedures must be connected to the sewer or have a wastewater storage tank suitable for the reception of all liquid wastes. Wastewater storage tanks must be discharged to the sewer and not to the stormwater.
- Hand wash facilities at each location shall be easily accessible. They shall consist of an adequate supply of potable water. Alternatively, waterless alcohol-based antiseptic hand gels, foams, or liquids can be used by mobile operators.

## Skin penetration procedures

Any business that offers a procedure that is defined as a 'skin penetration' procedure under the *Health (Skin Penetration Procedures) Regulations 1998* must comply with the regulations and the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures.

A skin penetration procedure is a procedure in which

- a) the skin is cut, punctured, torn or shaved; or
- b) mucous membrane is cut, punctured or torn

Such procedures include:

- body piercing
- tattooing and cosmetic tattooing
- branding and scarification



- skin needling
- tattoo removal (acid or saline injection)
- flesh tunnelling
- beauty treatments – such as nail treatments, manicures, pedicures and skin peels
- hair removal – including electrolysis, shaving, tweezing and waxing, threading

Non-compliance with the Code and the Regulations constitutes an offence under the *Health Act 1911* and the Regulations. Further details are available on at [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)



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