

Mr Mayell died of Legionnaire's Disease on the weekend.

THE wife of a man who died from Legionnaire's Disease at the weekend has warned of the dangers of setting hot water service temperatures too low.



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Picture: SUPPLIED BY FAMILY

Stock agent John Mayell died in Flinders Medical Centre on Sunday after contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a hot water service at the Beachport home he shared with his wife of almost 60 years, Jan.

Mrs Mayell said her husband had suffered ill health for the past two years, including recent pneumonia, which she believed made him susceptible to Legionnaire's. "They did tests in our house and unfortunately that's where it was found, in the shower head of our en suite and the sink in the kitchen," Mrs Mayell told The Advertiser.

Mrs Mayell, 78, said a new hot water service installed in the past year had a valve inside which reduced the temperature and created an environment where Legionella could develop. "It stopped the water from overheating and the water was tested at only 40 degrees celsius, when it should have been at least 50 to kill any possible bug like Legionella," she said. "I wonder about other people, a lot of hot water services are turned back these days through social workers in case older people scald themselves and it's a very dangerous process as we can see now."

Mrs Mayell said her 83-year old husband was well known throughout the southeast through his career as a stock agent. "He was a stock agent for most of his life, he began when he was 16. He only retired about 10 years ago when we retired to Beachport where we'd spent our holidays for most of our almost 60 years of marriage. He was well respected as a judge of good stock and cattle, he was very dedicated to his job but he found time for his family as well."

SA Health acting director of public health, Dr Chris Lease, said people should be aware of the risks associated with reducing the temperatures in hot water services – which carry a national requirement to be set at 60 degrees or higher. "However keeping water at this temperature can increase the risk of scalding injuries, particularly for children and older people," Dr Lease said.

Dr Lease said anyone unsure of temperature setting should contact their manufacturer or plumber, and said showers or wash basins not used regularly should be flushed with hot water to eliminate any bacteria.

Council on the Ageing chief executive Ian Yates said warnings should be fine tuned to alert the elderly to the dangers of reducing water temperature.

Mr Mayell's death will be investigated by the Coroner and SA Health declined to comment further yesterday.

A comment from Australia's foremost Legionella Consultant (Ex UK) [Clive Broadbent](#)

I went through all this with the gas-fired instantaneous hot water system I had installed a couple of years ago for my residence. It's set at 50C. That's the law. I complained but was informed that changing that setting is illegal and no licensed plumber will do it. Regrettable I know but there are stringent gas-fitting laws here plus that underlying child scalding issue don't forget.

We now have an arrangement in my household. My wife has strong lungs (don't I know it!!). She gets the first shower each morning.