

PFAS investigation update

Blue Mountains catchment

NSW Health and Sydney Water have confirmed that tap water in the Blue Mountains meets Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is safe to drink.

WaterNSW, as the operator of dams in the Blue Mountains, is working closely with NSW Health and Sydney Water to ensure drinking water remains safe.

Blue Mountains drop in sessions

Mid Mountains Community Centre

7 New Street, Lawson

4:30pm-8:00pm, Thursday 26/9

Blue Mountains Cultural Centre

30 Parke St, Katoomba

8:30am-2:00pm, Friday 27/9

8:30am-5:00pm, Wednesday 2/10

Representatives from WaterNSW, Sydney Water and NSW Health available to answer questions.

WaterNSW is conducting additional, targeted PFAS-related investigations to ensure there is up-to-date information on the presence of PFAS in the catchment, so any risks continue to be managed appropriately.

Investigation

To better understand sources of PFAS in the Blue Mountains catchment, WaterNSW is:

- **Monitoring and testing soil and water throughout the catchment.** We are undertaking rigorous testing of water sources and soil in the Blue Mountains' catchment, with more than 100 samples from 30 sites, including water testing at various depths in the Blue Mountains dams.
- **Ensuring correct sampling collection, transport and analysis.** Sampling, collection and transport are conducted by highly-skilled professionals with strict protocols in place. Our partner labs have detailed steps that must be followed to ensure accurate analysis of our samples. This is essential to ensure that samples are not contaminated by everyday items that contain PFAS such as outdoor clothing, makeup, and sunscreen. Our monitoring teams are [ISO 9001](#) certified, and all partner laboratories are [NATA](#) accredited.
- **Mapping land use** across the catchment to help identify the potential source or cause of contaminants.



Medlow Dam

- **Investigating fire and firefighting history**
WaterNSW is working with multiple government agencies including Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire and Rescue to explore historical land use including potential activities where PFAS has been used, such as firefighting activities.
- **Tracing catchment drainage pathways** such as sewerage and stormwater
- Engaging a **contaminated site investigation specialist** to provide tailored advice and ensure every avenue of enquiry is explored.
- Developing a **conceptual site model** to understand the ways that contaminants may move from sources in the soil and water through the catchment, helping target sampling and evaluate options for mitigation.

Source water quality

To ensure the quality of source water supplied to Sydney Water for treatment as drinking water, WaterNSW is:

- keeping Medlow Dam and Greaves Dam disconnected from the supply network
- frequently testing the Cascades dams and Oberon Dam source water
- arranging to transfer water from Oberon Dam, which has recorded near zero levels of PFAS, to the Cascade dams to dilute PFAS levels
- modelling the time frame required to dilute PFAS to inform our longer-term operating plans
- working with Sydney Water to review the water supply system to ensure we continue to supply water safely and efficiently
- ensuring our teams are ready to adapt to any changing conditions or new information as it becomes available.

Collaboration

WaterNSW continues to collaborate with experts and other government agencies, including:

- working closely with NSW Health and Sydney Water on investigations and our risk assessment
- engaging PFAS contamination investigation specialists to collaborate with WaterNSW experts
- engaging with the Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire and Rescue to better understand the use of PFAS for firefighting in the catchment.

Results

Medlow Dam and Greaves Creek Dam

Water Quality results indicate Medlow Dam being impacted by higher levels of PFAS. Whilst this dam does not supply the water filtration plant directly, Medlow Dam and Greaves Creek Dam were disconnected from supply on 7 August while further investigations are conducted.

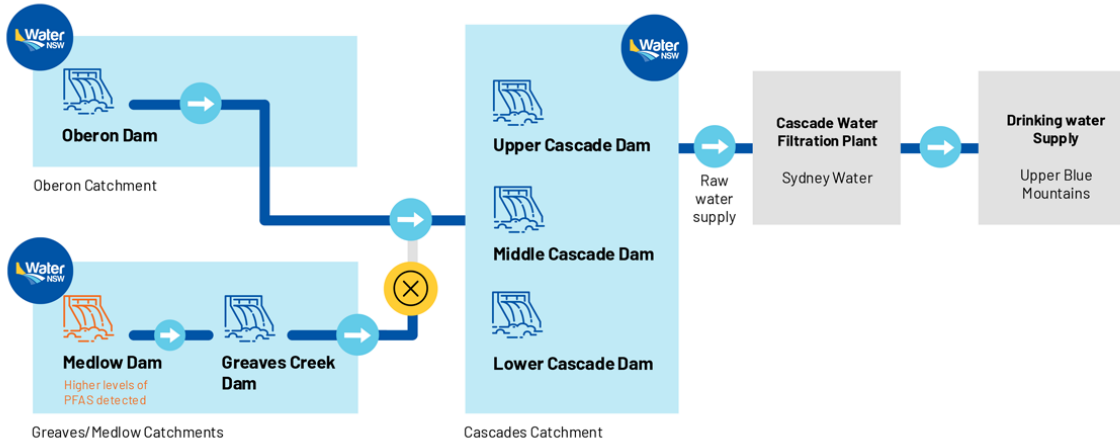
Adams Creek

Catchment testing has highlighted Adam's Creek, a small creek in the upper reaches of the Medlow catchment that flows into Medlow Dam, as an area for targeted investigations.

Focused soil and water sample testing is currently being conducted in this area.

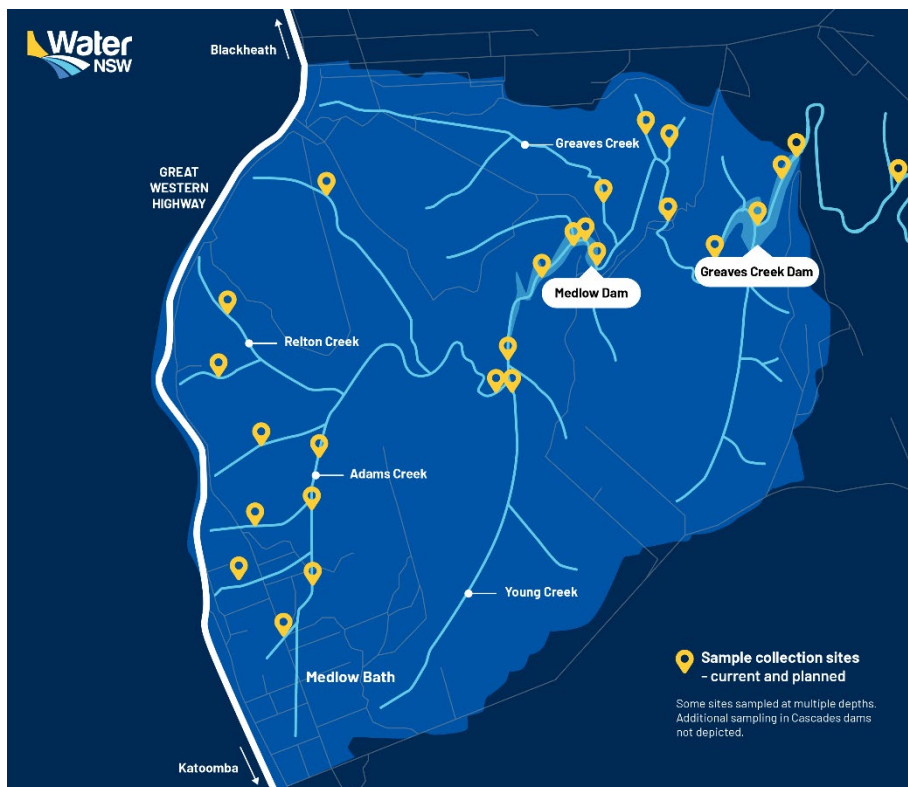
Medlow Dam and Greaves Creek Dam remain disconnected from the Blue Mountains water supply system as we conduct catchment investigations.

Simplified overview of the upper Blue Mountains water supply system



1. Oberon Dam and the Greaves Catchment feed water to the Cascades Catchment. Higher levels of PFAS have been detected in Medlow Dam.
2. WaterNSW has **closed the pipeline** between the Greaves/Medlow and Cascade Catchments.
3. WaterNSW supplies water to Sydney Water's Cascade water filtration plant to treat and supply drinking water to the Upper Blue Mountains.

Medlow and Greaves Creek sample sites



Frequently asked questions

What are PFAS?

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals. They've been widely used in industrial and consumer products since the 1950s, as they are effective at resisting heat, stains, grease and water.

They can be found in products like stain and water protection for carpets, non-stick cookware, paper coatings, cosmetics and sunscreen. Some PFAS have also been used in fire-fighting foams.

Their resistance to heat, stains, grease and water also means that they don't break down fully in the environment, and can travel long distances in water.

PFAS and drinking water

All water supplied as drinking water must meet the [Australian Drinking Water Guidelines](#). The guidelines specify that:

- For PFOS and PFHxS, the limit is a combined total of less than 0.07 micrograms per litre (µg/L).
- For PFOA, the limit is less than 0.56 µg/L.

WaterNSW supplies untreated water, sometimes described as 'raw water' or 'source water', to Sydney Water who treat and supply the water to your tap ready to drink. The Fish River Water Supply System is an exception.

PFAS were detected by Sydney Water in the Cascade water filtration plant drinking water supply network. All treated water samples were at least five times below Australian Drinking Water Guideline levels, and NSW Health and Sydney Water have confirmed the water supplied from the Cascade water filtration plant to local communities is safe to consume.

How is the catchment monitored?

Sydney's drinking water catchment is 16,000 square kilometres – about half the size of Belgium. Water quality monitoring across the catchment follows a targeted, risk-based approach to ensure Australian Drinking Water Guidelines are met. Consistent with government regulatory frameworks, the approach is based on expert advice from NSW Health and other authorities such as the Environment Protection Authority.

What testing is done?

WaterNSW conducts routine testing across the Greater Sydney catchment to ensure the best quality water is pumped to Sydney Water, where it is further tested and treated to meet Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Water goes through multiple levels of testing to ensure it is safe and meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

How is WaterNSW sharing results of PFAS testing?

Results are published on the WaterNSW website. Please visit waternsw.com.au/pfas for more information:

