

PFAS community update

March 2025 | Blue Mountains catchment

Sharing the community's concern

PFAS chemicals are an emerging global issue following decades of domestic and commercial usage before their residual and potentially harmful properties were fully understood.

WaterNSW shares the community's concern about their presence in dam water and has not been a party to the use, procurement or approval of these chemicals.

WaterNSW has been investigating the likely sources of contamination in Medlow and Greaves Creek dams, which remain disconnected from the water supply system.

Findings from the preliminary investigation are now being reviewed by the NSW PFAS Expert Panel and NSW PFAS Technical Advisory Group, comprising experts from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), NSW Health and a number of specialists from relevant government departments, prior to being finalised.

Preliminary investigation progress

As part of the investigations, WaterNSW is collaborating with multiple government agencies to understand historic land use and activities to identify potential sources of contamination. This investigation is one of the most complex of its

type ever undertaken by WaterNSW. It coincides with work by multiple government agencies to address PFAS in the urban and natural environment.

To date, the preliminary investigation has involved:

- Carrying out more than 250 water, soil and sediment samples at 37 catchment locations
- Taking samples along water drainage lines, creek lines and reservoirs in the catchment
- Collaborating with other agencies to understand historic land use, including sourcing and sifting through thousands of paper documents and research through archival records dating back decades
- Working closely with a contaminated site investigation specialist
- Tracing drainage pathways and developing conceptual modelling to understand the way contaminants may move throughout the catchment and ways they might respond to different weather events, such as in heavy rainfall, drought and even bushfire
- Improving knowledge of local firefighting history has also been a key focus of the WaterNSW investigation.

We are working closely with the EPA, which is leading an investigation into the legacy of PFAS use across NSW. Findings from the preliminary



Greaves Creek Dam

investigation will be available on completion of the expert panel review.

Next steps

Findings from the preliminary investigation are now being reviewed by the PFAS Expert Panel and NSW PFAS Technical Advisory Group, comprising experts from the EPA, NSW Health, and a number of relevant government departments.

Advice provided by the EPA, the Expert Panel and the Technical Advisory Group will be used to inform any potential options for remediation and long-term strategies for the management of contaminated land and water sources. WaterNSW will consult with the EPA and relevant agencies on the scope of works and any other actions recommended by the expert panel.

Timing for the next stage of investigations and how those are undertaken will be dependent on the findings of the external expert reviews currently underway, and influenced by the nature and extent of contamination.

Separately, Sydney Water has already installed a new treatment system at the Cascade Water

Filtration Plant which has been operating since January 2025. You can read more about this on [Sydney Water's website](#).

Current testing program

WaterNSW is continuing to carry out fortnightly testing of the [Blue Mountains System](#), and monthly testing of [Greater Sydney storage dams](#). These results are published on our website monthly.

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

Visit nsw.gov.au/pfas to learn more.

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.

Frequently asked questions

What are PFAS?

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

PFAS can be found in stain and water protection, non-stick cookware, paper coatings, food packaging, cosmetics, sunscreen and more. Some PFAS have also been used in fire-fighting foams.

These same properties of resistance also mean they don't break down fully in the environment, and can travel long distances in water.

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 at waternsw.com.au/pfas