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9 December 2024

Office of the Chief Executive Officer

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The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC
NSW Minister for Water
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email:

Dear Minister Jackson,

SUBJECT PFAS Detected in Medlow Bath Dam

Blue Mountains City Council notes the recent finding of PFAS in Medlow Bath Dam.

At the ordinary meeting of 29 October 2024, the Council resolved:

1. *That the Council write to the Hon. Rose Jackson, NSW Minister for Water and copy to Trish Doyle MP, about the reported PFAS contamination of Medlow Bath dam requesting:*
 - *That there is independent and rigorous testing for PFAS and other contaminants, and for those results to be published;*
 - *That an explanation be provided on the merits and proposal to reduce or eliminate PFAS from our drinking water;*
 - *That there be further investigations into the source/s of contamination;*
 - *That an explanation be provided about how the current contamination happened, despite the significant history of use of firefighting foams in the Blue Mountains and the dangers of PFAS having been known for many years;*
 - *That a response be provided on remediation strategies and responsibilities;*
2. *That the Council write to the Hon. Mark Butler, Commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care and copy to Susan Templeman MP identifying the potential risk to Blue Mountains drinking water from PFAS, and to request the completion of the review PFAS levels in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines is completed in a timely manner; and*

the city within a
World Heritage Area

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3. *That the Council receive a briefing for Councillors from representatives of Sydney Water and/or Water NSW in relation to the management of PFAS contamination of Medlow Bath Dam*

[Minute No. 225]

Blue Mountains City Council are seeking a full and proper account to be provided by the water authorities and NSW Government as to the cause of the elevated PFAS and impacts to the environment and community health.

Council is deeply concerned about the elevated levels of PFAS in the upper Blue Mountains drinking water catchment and potential impacts on human health, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, the Blue Mountains' reputation as a pristine, world-class tourism destination and local Traditional Custodians, Dharug and Gundungurra people, for whom the living waterways of the Blue Mountains hold great cultural significance.

Investigation into the source of PFAS contamination in the two affected dams is ongoing at the time of writing. It is not known how long PFAS levels have been elevated in these drinking water supplies, or what historical levels of PFAS have been.

Residents have been assured by Sydney Water that local tap water is within the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is safe to drink. However, Council notes recent proposed changes to Australian Drinking Water Guidelines include a significant lowering of the acceptable PFAS levels in drinking water.

Notably all the recent test results of drinking water from the Cascade filtration plant, as published by Sydney Water, are above the new draft Australian Drinking Water guidelines for PFAS. Levels have varied between two and four times the new proposed guideline of 0.004 µg/L.

Given the fact that the PFAS contamination was not detected sooner, and that the contamination has occurred for an unknown period, possibly decades, it is understandable that many community members see this issue as a breach of trust by Government agencies.

Rigorous monitoring, transparency with investigation results, and a full and proper account as to the cause of elevated PFAS levels will be a critical step towards restoring trust. It is vital for the community to feel confident that action is being taken to protect public health, based on the best available evidence.

Council has also made a submission to the NSW Inquiry into PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies and urges a thorough investigation into this matter.

Yours faithfully

(7 lines)

ROSEMARY DILLON
Chief Executive Officer

Copy: Trish Doyle MP, Member for Blue Mountains
Email: