

Select Committee into PFAS contamination in waterways and drinking water supplies throughout New South Wales

NSW EPA response to the question on notice (page 43)

The CHAIR: After that research was released into the deaths of platypuses, has the EPA tested, for example, that area, or do you already know that the Hunter sewage treatment plant is discharging high levels of PFAS into the river?

DAVID GATHERCOLE: I will defer to my colleague. Have we been looking with Hunter Water?

CORRIE FORD: Hunter Water do testing at all of their STPs fairly regularly, so the EPA does have access to that information. But I don't have that in front of me. I can't give you any definitive answer at this point.

DAVID GATHERCOLE: We have made some investigations with Hunter Water. I'm not sure if we've tested upstream from that water treatment plant, Chair.

Answer:

The University of Western Sydney has advised the EPA that the dead platypus was collected from the Hunter River at Morpeth at the boat ramp which is upstream of the Morpeth sewage treatment plant (STP) operated by Hunter Water Corporation.

The EPA has been informed that Hunter Water Corporation tests for PFAS in the effluent from Morpeth STP every two months. The EPA has requested access to this data.

As part of its investigation, the EPA has undertaken water sampling in the Hunter River at Morpeth for PFAS on 12 February 2025. The water samples are currently being analysed at the laboratory.

NSW EPA response to the question on notice (page 44)

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How close are we to finding the origin of the PFAS in the Warialda drinking water?

The CHAIR: That's Gwydir council.

DAVID GATHERCOLE: I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

Councils' investigation identified two bores as the likely source of PFAS. These bores have been isolated and are not supplying water. In recent tests, the PFAS levels were below the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

The EPA will continue to work with Council and NSW Health to identify potential PFAS sources that maybe impacting these bores. The EPA used the national agreed approaches as part of site investigations as outlined in the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan 2.0.