



6 March 2025

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Chair
Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies
Throughout New South Wales

Sydney Water responses to supplementary questions

Dear Ms Faehrmann

Please see below for Sydney Water responses to the 17 supplementary questions provided.

PFAS Testing and Monitoring in Sydney Water Supply

(1) How frequently does Sydney Water test for PFAS in drinking water, and have recent results detected any concerning levels?

Sydney Water commenced testing for PFAS in drinking water at North Richmond Water Filtration Plant in 2019 through a targeted monitoring program using a risk-based approach to PFAS.

Sydney Water began testing at all its plants in June 2024 following public discourse and customer concern created by the proposed changes to US drinking water guidelines. This included monthly testing at Cascade and North Richmond water filtration plants.

In October 2024, Sydney Water increased testing frequency to weekly at the Cascade and North Richmond Water Filtration Plants and continued monthly testing at all other Water Filtration Plants.

All water supplied to Greater Sydney meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

(2) Has Sydney Water identified any high-risk areas in the Greater Sydney region where PFAS contamination is an ongoing concern?

Sydney Water's monitoring program has not identified any high-risk areas. However, identifying PFAS contamination in the water supply catchments is the responsibility of WaterNSW.

(3) Given increasing public concern, should Sydney Water publish real-time PFAS monitoring data to improve transparency?

The publication of data on Sydney Water's website has been designed to provide customers with accurate information that is easy to interpret and explains any risk associated with the water being supplied.

Sydney Water aims to supply the results within 14 days of sample collection. This is to ensure the appropriate quality control for the sample has been achieved and Sydney Water is reporting accurate results.

Sydney Water plans to publish the results of all PFAS compounds it tests, including compounds without guideline values.

(4) How does Sydney Water ensure residents are notified if PFAS levels exceed safe thresholds?

Sydney Water is required to alert NSW Health if PFAS thresholds in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines are ever exceeded. All results are included in Quarterly Drinking Water Quality reports published on Sydney Water's website.

All water supplied to Greater Sydney meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

PFAS Removal and Treatment Capabilities

(5) Are Sydney Water's current filtration and treatment systems capable of effectively removing PFAS from drinking water?

The treatment system installed at the Cascade Water Filtration Plant is specifically designed to remove PFAS from the source water. Recent testing results indicate that the drinking water being supplied to customers from this plant not only meets the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines but would also meet the proposed new guidelines.

The system at the North Richmond Filtration Plant also has the technology to remove PFAS chemicals, and similarly it not only meets the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines but would also meet the proposed new guidelines.

Testing results have consistently shown that the water produced at Sydney Water's remaining seven water filtration plants not only meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines but would also meet the proposed new guidelines. Therefore, these plants do not require additional treatment systems designed to remove PFAS chemicals.

(6) What upgrades would be required to meet the latest international PFAS water safety standards?

Only the Cascade Water Filtration Plant would require a longer-term augmentation, which is currently in the planning phase.

(7) Does Sydney Water have a long-term strategy to improve PFAS removal from drinking water?

The National Health and Medical Research Council notes that exposure to PFAS can occur through many pathways. Exposure to PFOS and PFOA from drinking water has been previously estimated to be approximately 2-3% of total PFAS exposure in areas with low levels of contamination. Sydney Water strongly supports any efforts to eliminate PFAS from

the environment at the source, which would limit the amount of PFAS entering drinking water supplies. Sydney Water will continue to collect data, review research and emerging treatment processes as part of its long term strategy to improve PFAS removal from drinking water.

(8) Would Sydney Water support mandatory state funding for PFAS removal infrastructure?

This is a matter for the NSW Government.

Regulatory Compliance and Public Health Protection

(9) Does Sydney Water believe that Australia's PFAS drinking water limits are adequate, or should NSW adopt stricter standards?

Australia has a robust process for developing guidelines for drinking water. Sydney Water supports the National Health and Medical Research Council and will work with NSW Health to implement any new guideline that is required.

(10) Given that the US and EU have significantly lowered PFAS exposure limits, should NSW follow international best practice?

The appropriate guidelines and how they are determined for Australia are a matter for the National Health and Medical Research Council and NSW Health.

(11) Has Sydney Water raised concerns with the NSW Government about inadequate PFAS regulations?

Sydney Water adheres to the requirements of its regulators including its operating licence, which requires it to meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

(12) If Sydney Water detected unsafe PFAS levels in drinking water, what immediate actions would be taken?

As part of Sydney Water's Drinking Water Quality Management System, it has an incident response protocol with NSW Health. An exceedance of any health guideline requires Sydney Water to notify NSW Health. In the first instance when there is an exceedance, a resample is taken to verify the original result. If required, an investigation would be undertaken to determine the source of the contamination and actions taken to address the issue.

Future Planning and Community Engagement

(13) Should NSW introduce legally binding PFAS contamination limits in drinking water to enforce higher safety standards?

This is a matter for the NSW Government and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

(14) How is Sydney Water engaging with local councils and communities to address PFAS concerns?

Sydney Water briefed Blue Mountains Council in late 2024 and is also arranging to brief Hawkesbury Council to address any PFAS concerns each Council may have.

Sydney Water undertakes regular engagement with its customers to understand their level of concern towards PFAS. Sydney Water proactively communicates its PFAS management response through its quarterly "Waterwrap" newsletter which reaches millions of Greater Sydney residents.

Several community drop-in sessions were arranged in 2024 to allow for residents of the Blue Mountains to talk to Sydney Water staff responsible for managing water quality and inform them of Sydney Water's approach to managing PFAS. Sydney Water will continue to notify the Blue Mountains community of important updates to managing PFAS including any decision regarding longer term upgrades to the Cascade Water Filtration Plant.

Sydney Water also continues to publish PFAS testing results on its website weekly.

(15) Has Sydney Water received adequate financial and technical support from the NSW Government to manage PFAS contamination risks?

Yes.

(16) What is Sydney Water's long-term strategy to ensure PFAS-free drinking water for residents?

Sydney Water will always ensure the drinking water supplied to customers meets the current and any proposed updated Australian Drinking Water Guidelines as required by its Operating Licence. This will be achieved through monitoring and treatment, where required. Sydney Water is also supportive of the government and industry initiatives aimed at the banning of PFAS in products.

(17) If NSW does not strengthen PFAS regulations and filtration infrastructure, what are the long-term risks for Sydney's drinking water quality?

Sydney Water has installed a treatment system at Cascade Water Filtration Plant. This and the longer-term augmentation at the plant will ensure that the water supplied to the customers in the Blue Mountains will meet the proposed new Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. All of Sydney Water's other filtration plants meet the proposed new PFAS values.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact Sydney Water's Government Relations Team via email at

Yours sincerely

Roch Cheroux
Managing Director