

**Submission  
No 41**

**INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO PFAS CONTAMINATION  
IN WATERWAYS AND DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES  
THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** WinZero

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## Dear Select Committee on PFAS,

I am writing on behalf of WinZero, a community-led environmental organisation based in the Southern Highlands. As a registered charity collaborating with 12 local environmental groups, we are deeply concerned about the health of our drinking water and rivers.

I wish to express my strong concern regarding Australia's current approach to regulating per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water. Compared to international standards, our nation's regulations are inadequate, potentially jeopardising public health. I urge the Committee to address the following points:

### Alarming High PFAS Limits in Australia

Australia's PFAS limits for drinking water are significantly higher than international benchmarks:

- **PFOA:** 560 parts per trillion (ppt)
- **PFOS and PFHxS (combined):** 70 ppt

In stark contrast, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently established enforceable limits of 4 ppt for both PFOA and PFOS individually. This means our PFOA limit is 140 times higher than the US standard.

### Health Risks and International Recognition

The World Health Organization classified PFOA as a Class 1 human carcinogen in 2023 [4]. The US EPA has identified PFAS exposure as a contributor to numerous health issues, including:

- Immune system dysfunction
- Cardiovascular complications
- Adverse effects on fetal and infant development

### Recommendations for Urgent Action

Australia must act swiftly to protect public health. I urge the Committee to prioritise the following measures:

1. **Comprehensive Assessment:** Evaluate PFAS as a class of chemicals, aiming to restrict and eventually eliminate all uses, in alignment with the European Union and the Stockholm Convention.
2. **Stricter Regulations:** Implement legally enforceable PFAS limits that match or exceed global best practices.
3. **Improved Monitoring:** Establish a nationwide, systematic approach to PFAS testing in drinking water, addressing current gaps described as "hit and miss".
4. **Public Transparency:** Mandate public disclosure of PFAS levels in drinking water, following the US model.
5. **Mandate Labelling of Products Containing PFAS:** Require manufacturers to disclose the presence of PFAS in certain products. For instance:
  - Juvenile products must be labelled if they contain PFAS.
  - Cookware manufacturers must disclose the presence of PFAS on product labels and websites.
6. **Accelerated Timeline:** Expedite the review of PFAS drinking water guidelines by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Waiting until 2025 is unacceptable given the urgency of this issue.

## Conclusion

Australia's PFAS standards are outdated and insufficient, as Dr. Mariann Lloyd-Smith aptly described them: "an international embarrassment". The time to act is now. Strengthened regulations, improved monitoring, and public transparency are essential to safeguarding public health.

Thank you for considering this critical issue. I trust the Committee will take decisive action to align our PFAS regulations with global best practices.

**Sincerely,**

✓ Gaye White  
Communications Director, WinZero