

W A R I A L D A Water Update

Friday 13 December 2024



Testing

When testing for PFAS in a water supply a specific testing kit needs to be used. When Council was advised of the positive test for the presence of PFAS in the North Reservoir a kit was sent by courier from the laboratory. Yesterday one (of two kits) was received. From this kit three samples were taken, and a Council staff member drove this sample straight to Sydney. Unfortunately, the second kit which is needed did not arrive at Warialda until this morning. Water samples cannot be taken today as they will not arrive in Sydney in time for the laboratory to test and the laboratory does not operate over the weekend. Council has made arrangements for the remaining water samples to be taken first thing Monday morning, and a staff member will take them to Sydney straight away. Council expects full sample results on Tuesday 17 December 2024

Just letting all know that bottled water is available at the Warialda Visitor Information Centre. This will be the only venue where water can be collected. The Centre will be open this Saturday and Sunday between 9am and 5pm, as well as Council's normal weekday operating hours.

Thank You

Council would like to acknowledge the assistance of the two Gwydir Shire grocery outlets in supplying such large amounts of water in such a short period of time.

Recycling

Council is mindful that during this time there is an increased volume of plastic waste.

To reduce the environmental impact Council encourages residents to recycle plastic waste by using the Warialda Return and Earn situated at IGA or from this afternoon empty water bottles and containers can be taken to the Visitor Information Centre (enter opening hours) or the Warialda Landfill (8:30-12pm and 1:30-5:30pm 7 days).

At these two venues there will have large reusable bags available to collect the bottles in.

Please ensure that the bottles and containers are drained of all water (so the bags don't get too heavy).

These will be taken to Bingara Return and Earn and the money raised will go to the Warialda Community Warriors.

Information about PFAS

Late yesterday, Council received from NSW Health these useful links which provides information about PFAS.

- Questions and answers on review of PFAS in drinking water | NHMRC
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/environmental-health/water/PFAS-review/questions-and-answers>
- enHealth fact sheet on Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care - This FACT SHEET is also attached.

In addition, NSW Health has responded to the following questions which Council had asked of them. These questions were received from residents.

Q: Is the finding of PFAS in the storage tanks or in a bore?

At this point, the excess PFAS levels have been found in the North Reservoir. Council will test all of the bores that feed reservoirs to try to identify the source of PFAS. If a single bore is the source of contamination, then that bore could be isolated from supplying the reservoir.

Q: Does my water filter prevent the consumption of PFAS? If so, what type should I use?

Some home filtration systems can reduce PFAS in drinking water. Filters certified to standards such as "NSF/ANSI 53" or "NSF/ANSI 58" are recommended by the USEPA. More information is available on the NHMRC website.

Q: Do you recommend not drinking the water? "Unlikely to pose a risk" doesn't reassure me.

NSW Health advises continuing to drink the water in Warialda in the short term is unlikely to pose a health risk. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines are based on minimising risk over a lifetime of consumption of drinking water and include several safety factors. Free bottled water will be provided for those who prefer to use it for drinking and cooking during the investigation.

Q: Will boiling reduce or eliminate the risk?

No, boiling water does not reduce or remove PFAS.



Results

Below is a table and explanatory notations of the results of the water sample taken from the Northern Reservoir on 5 December 2024.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) testing for sample collected 5/12/2024 (northern reservoir)

Characteristic	Current ADWG value*	Proposed ADWG value*	Result	Meeting current ADWG value
Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)	0.560 µg/L 560 ng/L	0.2 µg/L 200 ng/L	0.003 µg/L 3 ng/L	Yes
Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS)	Sum of PFOS and PFHxS 0.07 µg/L 70 ng/L	0.004 µg/L 4 ng/L	0.039 µg/L 390ng/L	No**
Perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS)		0.03 µg/L 30 ng/L	0.077 µg/L 77 ng/L	No**
Perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS)	No current guideline value	1 µg/L 1000 ng/L	0.013 µg/L 13 ng/L	Yes

*Units: microgram per litre (µg/L), nanogram per litre (ng/L)

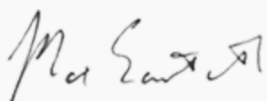
** **combined PFOS + PFHxS is 0.116 µg/L, approximately 1.5 times the current guideline value of 0.07 µg/L.**

PFAS chemicals - or per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances - are synthetic chemicals found in many everyday products. They have been widely used in many industrial and consumer applications as they are effective at resisting heat, stains, grease and water. The guideline values show the amount of PFAS in drinking water that a person can consume on a daily basis over a lifetime without any appreciable risk to health.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRMC) has stated that drinking water supplies that comply with the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) are safe to drink.

The proposed drinking water guideline values are a draft and will not be considered final until they are published by the NHRMC, which is anticipated for April 2025. The existing PFAS guideline values remain current until the updated values are finalised and published.

If you have questions, please email mail@gwydir.nsw.gov.au or call 02 6729 3000 or follow Gwydir Shire Council's Facebook page. More updates will be made available as information and sample results are recieved.



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