

# Salt Ash Public School

Information pack | 18 October 2023

We are supporting the school community with the ongoing management of PFAS at Salt Ash Public School. Since the establishment of the Williamstown PFAS Management Area in 2016 the Department of Education has carried out regular testing of soil and water at Salt Ash Public School as part of our risk management plan for the school.

This information pack summarises how we're managing PFAS at your school, recent work and how we're continuing to manage the safety of students and staff.

## Managing PFAS at Salt Ash Public School

Since regular monitoring by independent contaminated land consultants of PFAS at Salt Ash Public School identified slightly elevated levels of PFAS in the north east corner of the playground, we have been working with them and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) on recommended additional comprehensive testing and risk assessments.

We have kept the community informed about this and the comprehensive testing that took place in the July school holiday period. As advised, results of this testing showed elevated levels again in the sub-soil of the north east corner of the playground, as well as in samples from near the covered playground and sandpit.

Based on advice from the contaminated land consultants we have implemented a number of additional controls to reduce students interacting with the soil. This includes, fencing areas off, replacing soil, replacing sand, increasing personal hygiene requirements during some activities for students and staff, and laying artificial turf to reduce erosion and interaction with soil.

Working with the independent consultants, department health and safety team and your school leadership, we have updated the risk management plan for the school that was first implemented in 2016 to address the risk of PFAS contamination at the school and to inform ongoing remediation work at the school.

A human health risk assessment is being prepared by the independent consultants to assess the possible health implications of PFAS contamination and which may inform the development of an Environmental Management Plan for the school site. This assessment is under review by the Department of Education, NSW Health and NSW EPA.

### Update since our last notification end of Term 3: measures to limit soil interaction

In our most recent notification (18 September 2023) we let you know about additional personal hygiene practices that are to be adopted when maintenance such as lawn mowing or gardening is occurring, to reduce the potential spread of soil and dust. Also that the sand will be replaced in the sandpit annually or more frequently if required.

We also let you know that we would be installing artificial turf in the playground, where maintaining enough grass to cover the soil was too difficult. The installation of this turf has been completed. These measures are all part of the ongoing risk management plan and complement the processes already in place to prevent students interacting with soil.

We continue to work with the independent consultants, NSW EPA and NSW Health on planning testing and further remediation work at the school. The health, safety and wellbeing of your children, staff and the local community is our highest priority.



The independent consultants have advised that current safety measures adopted by the school remain suitable to prevent students interacting with soil in the impacted areas.

Regular testing will continue and you will be notified when testing or works to address PFAS are scheduled.

See below for more information on next steps.

## Risk Management Plan

The risk management plan (RMP) was updated to further limit student and staff interaction with the soil. Your school has the plan and has enacted it. You can request a copy from the school if you would like more information.

The RMP includes safety and management guidelines when completing maintenance that may disturb soil. This includes:

- notifying school staff to close windows and doors before work starts
- conducting work outside of school hours or when students are inside classrooms
- providing PPE to staff such as eyewear, masks and coveralls who are required to use blower to clear dust/dirt from COLA or paths
- cleaning equipment used within areas of concern to prevent the spread of soil.

The school has also implemented further behavioural measures following the advice of the independent consultants including:

- encouraging increased handwashing using hand washing stations throughout the school, and especially by using soap and water before eating
- removing soil from shoes
- supervision of students to prevent them from interacting with soil.

## Human health risk assessment

In accordance with recommendations by the NSW EPA, a human health risk assessment is being developed by the independent contaminated lands consultant. This will use the comprehensive testing results conducted this year, historical data and the current health-based guideline values for PFAS to provide an estimate of the magnitude of health risks to people regularly attending the school.

Understanding the possible extent of risk is important as it informs any further risk management stage. This includes recommended advice or actions (if required) to ensure that human health is protected.

Preliminary findings from this assessment recommend that the risk management plan and the safety measures already in place be continued and that regular testing is continued to monitor any potential for exposure as much as possible.

We will update the community on findings when the assessment is finalised.



## More information about how we manage PFAS at Salt Ash PS

The health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff at our more than 2,200 schools is always the Department of Education's highest priority.

We understand the ongoing situation regarding the presence of PFAS in your community is concerning, and we will continue to work to minimise the risk to your school community.

We will continue to organise testing and provide information to you on the PFAS levels at the school as well as any further remediation work or safety measures to be implemented.

All new or prospective families are provided information on the management of PFAS on the school site as part of a walk through prior to enrolment.

The risk management plan will continue to be followed, while the management of PFAS contamination will occur in strict accordance with Safe Work NSW, NSW Health and all applicable legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines.

Department and school counsellors are available to staff and students if they require additional support.

If you have any questions about PFAS remediation, planned works or safety measures, please contact School Infrastructure NSW on 1300 482 651 (during business hours) or [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au).

All works notifications and information packs like this are also published on the SINSW website, on the Salt Ash Public School webpage: <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/schools/3/3035.html>

### If you have more concerns

Anyone with further questions about PFAS can also contact the NSW EPA on 131 555, email [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au) or visit <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/contaminated-land/pfas-investigation-program>

Anyone with further health questions about PFAS can also contact your local NSW Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/pfos.aspx>

