

# Tarago Public School

## Community update

12 September 2022

Dear staff and parents/carers,

As previously advised, in April and June 2022, further water investigations were conducted at Tarago Public School by an independent hygienist, WSP. All locations sampled returned results below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead and copper after flushing. The independent hygienist, WSP, advised the water from the points sampled at Tarago Public School is safe for consumption. Additionally, NSW Health have reviewed the independent hygienist reports and have confirmed that the sampled water complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

The lead present in the first flush samples in the 2020 testing most likely came from soldered joints in the copper pipe or brass fittings in the bubbler taps. These are common sources of lead in plumbing, and NSW Health have confirmed this can be effectively managed with flushing measures. NSW Health's guidance is based on nationally agreed guidance from [enHealth](#). For further information please refer to the NSW Health webpage [Drinking water flushing and management for schools](#).

### Flushing measures for schools with rainwater tanks

The Department of Education's Water Supply Quality Assurance Program requires schools with rainwater tanks flush their water lines for three (3) minutes every Monday morning during normal school term and prior to the first day of each new school term.

As an added precaution, the Tarago Public School principal will continue flushing water lines for 3 minutes at the start of each day. To align with NSW Health and national advice, Tarago Public School will teach children the importance of flushing drinking taps and fountains for a short period (10 seconds) before consuming any water.

### Ongoing maintenance and testing

Ongoing maintenance of the Tarago Public School water supply includes: cleaning, desludging and servicing of potable water tanks every two years, replacement of the filter cartridges every six months, and annual replacement of the ultraviolet lights. In addition, roof and gutter cleaning is conducted bi-annually.

The department will continue to resample the water every 6 months in line with the advice of NSW Health.

The health, safety, and well-being of Tarago Public School and the local community is our highest priority, and we will continue to keep the community updated.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

---

#### For more information contact:

School Infrastructure NSW  
Email: [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 482 651  
[www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How is Tarago Public School's drinking water supplied?

The drinking water at Tarago Public School runs off the covered basketball court roof past first flush diverters into three large PVC tanks. The water is then treated through a filtration system and disinfected with ultraviolet light.

The school has additional water tanks installed with first flush diverters which do not feed into the schools drinking water tanks and are classified as non-potable and used for watering the school grounds.

### What is the Department of Education's Water Supply Quality Assurance Program?

The Department of Education and NSW Health developed a Water Quality Assurance Program for managing schools with rainwater tanks. The program is informed by a study of rainwater quality at schools, and identifies risk factors and testing actions to manage those risks including:

- installing particle filters and ultraviolet disinfection to protect against pathogens
- carrying out routine maintenance to keep the drinking water system safe
- assessing all the parts of the rainwater collection and distribution system and look for and remove any potential sources of lead, such as lead flashing or lead screw washers on roofs.
- installing lead removal filters
- testing the drinking water to confirm that all measures are working.

### Why were the Tarago Public School bubblers capped in 2020?

In 2020, following a notification by Transport for NSW that lead contamination was discovered along the rail corridor, the Department of Education engaged an independent hygienist, Greencap Pty Ltd to investigate, and undertake targeted lead sampling and a risk assessment.

Drinking water was tested at five locations across Tarago Public School, including bubblers and staff room taps. Most samples collected without flushing the taps contained lead at concentrations above the Australian Drinking Water Guideline value of 0.01 mg/L. Samples collected after 2 minutes of flushing were below the Australian Drinking Water Guideline value, except from the bubblers outside Block F.

Following this, Greencap advised that bubblers located on the external wall of Block F were to be permanently capped off, and that various flushing methods for other bubblers and taps be carried out.

At the time additional precautionary measures were implemented including sealing and capping all bubblers and supplying bottled drinking water.

### Why did the Department of Education undertake further testing in April and June 2022?

The testing in April and June 2022 at Tarago Public School took place as part of the Department of Education's Water Supply Quality Assurance Program.

### What did the April and June 2022 reports say?

The independent hygienist, WSP, advised all locations sampled returned results below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead and copper after flushing and is safe for consumption. WSP

---

#### For more information contact:

School Infrastructure NSW  
Email: [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 482 651  
[www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)

recommended continued consumption of the water from all sample points and resampling at the site after a period of 6 months. Based on the independent hygienists' advice, the Department of Education uncapped the bubblers on Friday, 22 July 2022.

### **Has the department provided the reports to the school community?**

The department has provided the independent hygienist reports to individual stakeholders on request and will also make the reports available on the [School Infrastructure NSW Tarago Public School webpage](#).

### **Is Tarago Public School's water supply contaminated?**

The testing of the school's water supply in 2020 and 2022 does not indicate that the rainwater tanks have been contaminated with lead from the site in the rail corridor. The reduction in lead concentration after flushing indicates that the lead detected in the first flush samples in 2020 came from lead solder in joints in the copper pipe, or brass parts of the bubblers.

These are common sources of lead in plumbing, and NSW Health have confirmed this can be effectively managed with flushing measures. NSW Health's guidance is based on nationally agreed guidance from [enHealth](#). For further information please refer to the NSW Health webpage [Drinking water flushing and management for schools](#).

### **In 2022, why did the independent hygienist take samples after the 3-minute flush had taken place?**

Sampling took place during peak usage times and after a 3-minute flush at each location as this is representative of what will be consumed.

### **Why didn't the Department undertake water testing at Tarago Public School between 2020 and 2022?**

Testing was not required as the school's bubblers and drinking water taps had been sealed in 2020 and bottled water was supplied to eliminate any potential health risk.

### **Will the department recap the bubblers at Tarago Public School?**

No. The department has implemented appropriate management and flushing measures to address any potential risk of lead from plumbing fittings.

The independent hygienist, WSP, advised all locations sampled at Tarago Public School returned results below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead and copper after flushing and is safe for consumption. Additionally, NSW Health have reviewed the independent hygienist reports and have confirmed that the sampled water complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

The department will resample the water at the site after a period of 6 months and will continue to liaise with NSW Health and undertake the advice of independent hygienists.

### **How do parents and carers know that the flushing measures are taking place?**

The Tarago Public School principal is undertaking the daily flushing herself prior to students and staff arriving and will ensure that arrangements are made for when she is not at the school.

---

#### **For more information contact:**

School Infrastructure NSW  
Email: [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 482 651  
[www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)