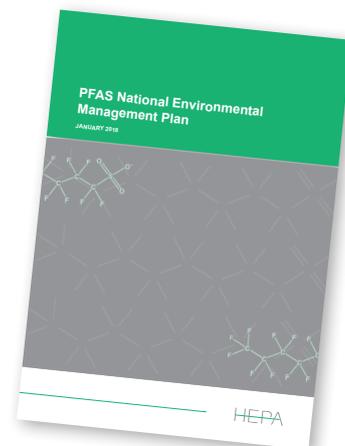


A guide to the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan

PFAS is an abbreviation for per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances. These are manufactured chemicals that have been used for more than 50 years. PFAS make products non-stick, water repellent, and weather and stain resistant. PFAS have been used in a range of products, including firefighting foams, pesticides and stain repellents.



PFAS resist heat, chemical and biological attack, and are very stable. This stability creates a problem: PFAS last for a long time. They easily enter the environment – moving into soil, creeks, rivers and lakes. There are many places in Australia that are contaminated by PFAS. Worldwide, there is growing concern about the effects of PFAS on our health and on animals and plants.

The Australian government and state and territory EPAs are working together to tackle PFAS contamination. The PFAS National Environmental Management Plan is designed to achieve clear, effective and coherent approaches to the environmental regulation of PFAS in Australia.

Public consultation

Development of the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan has included significant consultation, with information sessions in all states and territories and a public call for comments on a consultation draft that attracted over 180 responses.

The consultation process led to requests for:

- the plan to include all sources and uses of PFAS
- a centralised database of publicly available information on the occurrence of PFAS
- guidance on assessing and dealing with contaminated sites
- assistance with measurement and sampling approaches
- recommendations on remediation and treatment, and waste disposal
- adoption of a national waste code for the transport, storage and disposal of PFAS-containing wastes
- better understanding of the impact of PFAS on human health and the environment, including the effect of bioaccumulation (build up in plants and animals) and biomagnification (increasing concentrations at higher levels in a food chain)
- regular communication of the latest relevant Australian and international research findings
- comprehensive public communication, using a variety of approaches and media.

The Plan

The PFAS National Environmental Management Plan contains information on:

- communication and engagement
- PFAS monitoring and assessment
- evaluation of sites for contamination, and prioritising where action needs to occur
- sampling contaminated material and the techniques for measuring PFAS concentrations
- environmental levels that indicate the need for action
- how to deal with sites contaminated with PFAS
- waste and its transport and treatment
- information sharing across Australia
- future research and work to support the Plan and its revisions
- evaluating the Plan's effectiveness and reviewing it as new information becomes available.

The Plan includes extensive guidance notes designed to help governments, industry and the community identify, monitor and respond to PFAS contamination.