

Media Release

Environment Protection Authority



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EPA provides update on Keswick groundwater contamination

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) late last week letter box dropped approximately 1,500 residential and commercial properties in the Keswick area. This was to advise owners and occupiers that further investigations into groundwater and soil vapour contamination had commenced in the area. Residents were requested to not use groundwater for any purpose until further notice.

This advice follows the initial receipt by the EPA of a section 83(A) notification (mandatory notification of harm to groundwater) in December 2013 from Tierra Environmental, a site contamination consultant appointed to prepare a groundwater monitoring report.

This report detailed the presence of groundwater contamination, the source of which has yet to be identified. It has confirmed the presence of chemical substances in groundwater at concentrations in excess of Australian drinking water guideline values.

The chemicals identified include tetrachloromethane (chloroform), trichloromethane (carbon tetrachloride), trichloroethene (TCE), dichloroethene (DCE) and vinyl chloride (VC). The tetrachloromethane, trichloromethane, trichloroethene and vinyl chloride were historically used as part of industrial processes. It is suspected that these chemicals entered the groundwater through the historical practices.

Parsons Brinckerhoff, a site contamination consultant, has been engaged to assess the extent of off-site contamination originating from the former industrial site. The assessment began on 17 March 2014.

EPA Operations Director Peter Dolan said the investigation is to determine the extent of the contamination.

“We are overseeing this work as the original polluter has not been formally identified. It is our intention to provide further updates in due course to keep the wider community informed,” said Mr Dolan.

This investigation is at an early stage and is expected to take several weeks. A report on this preliminary work is expected to be available at the end of May.

Mr Dolan said, “The EPA will continue to have an active involvement in the assessment and remediation process while the extent of the area affected by the groundwater contamination is confirmed.

“This is also another opportunity to remind bore owners in general, that they should regularly test their bore water to ensure it is fit for purpose.”

Prior to Christmas last year, nearby residents and property owners with registered water bores were advised not to use their bore water. This advice is being reaffirmed to a broader community group via the current letter box drop.

For further information on the use of groundwater and contamination-related enquiries, please contact toll-free 1800 729 175 (8 am to 6 pm weekdays, excluding public holidays) or via e-mail at epasitecontam@epa.sa.gov.au.

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