



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## RAAF CONTAMINATION OF TOMAGO SANDBEDS REDUCES HUNTER WATER STORAGE

Hunter Water estimates it has indefinitely lost access to 1.5 billion litres of water due to the RAAF's use of firefighting foam containing chemicals PFOS and PFOA and their contamination of parts of the Tomago Sandbeds.

Hunter Water has three pump stations inside the EPA's investigation zone of the Tomago Sandbeds and has embargoed their use until such time as NSW Health approve them as safe to use.

Hunter Water has a process that involves sampling water at multiple points when drawing from the Sandbeds and has never detected PFOS or PFOA in any bore feeding water into our network. However the locations of the pump stations inside the investigation zone are considered to be at risk of contamination based on current information.

The 1.5 gigalitres of drinking water embargoed represents 2% of the total water available to Hunter Water across the region, or 10% of the water within the Tomago Sandbeds.

Hunter Water Interim CEO Jeremy Bath said the Department of Defence must move quickly to remediate the contamination of the Tomago Sandbeds.

"In the short term the loss of the water from the 3 embargoed pump stations doesn't threaten our ability to manage a drought. In the longer term however the loss of more than 2% of our total available water supply will bring forward by several years the need to expand our water supply. The cost of this would likely be in the tens of millions of dollars.

"Hunter Water expects the Department of Defence to remediate the Tomago Sandbeds as a priority. We want and need access to the 1.5 billion litres of water currently quarantined inside the Investigation Zone.

"Hunter Water has put its claim directly to the Department of Defence as well as formally via the EPA.

"This claim makes clear that the Department of Defence should develop a remediation plan for the Tomago Sandbeds and considers additional remediation offsite. All costs for this remediation are the responsibility of the Department of Defence.

"If ultimately the Department of Defence is unable to clean up the pollution it has caused then Hunter Water will seek financial compensation for the loss of access to billions of litres of water and the cost of bringing forward the design and construction of our next water source," he said.

Next year will be 100 years since Hunter Water was assigned as a trustee of 25km<sup>2</sup> of the Sandbeds. Today the Sandbeds has a catchment of 109km<sup>2</sup>, and acts as an emergency supply of water should the region experience a drought or lose temporary access to water sourced from Grahamstown Dam.

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