

Contaminated sites



Contaminated sites have pollutants or hazardous materials that can put ecosystems and human health at risk.

Before European colonisation, the lands, waters and skies of what is now NSW were cared for by Aboriginal people in a way that nurtured and preserved the environment.

Since colonisation, contamination has resulted from industrial pollution, poor waste disposal and the use of persistent and toxic chemicals in domestic, agricultural and industrial settings.

A contaminated site is a place where the soil or groundwater has been polluted by harmful substances. The level of contaminants usually exceeds what is considered safe for people and the environment. Many contaminated sites are only identified for remediation when the use of the land changes, such as an apartment development on a former industrial site.

Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately impacted by contamination due to legacy contamination on discrete Aboriginal communities, and ongoing exposure to contaminants. The NSW Government is leading condition assessments in these communities to help plan future upgrades and repairs. This includes the assessment of asbestos and other contaminants. The condition assessments will help identify the infrastructure support and investment that communities need.

At a glance

How NSW is tracking

- In NSW during 2021–23 the number of regulated contaminated sites remained stable. The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regulated about 202 sites per year in that period.
- The cumulative number of sites requiring regulation by the EPA continued to increase, reaching 406 by 2023.
- The cumulative number of sites where EPA regulation was ended continued to increase, reaching a total of 203 remediated sites by 2023.
- In 2023, lead blood levels exceeded the national limit in 74% of Aboriginal children and 37% of non-Aboriginal children aged one to four years in Broken Hill.

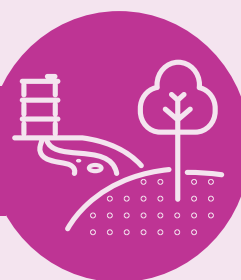
The big picture

All Australian governments are working to implement the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS). It establishes nationally consistent standards for managing the import, manufacture, export, use, and disposal of, industrial chemicals.

Contamination notifications

The EPA was notified of **25 significantly contaminated sites** during 2021–23.

25 significantly contaminated sites



Remediated sites

The EPA assessed **18 sites as no longer significantly contaminated** during 2021–23.

18 sites no longer significantly contaminated





Contaminated sites









A note on PFAS






- PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances) is a group of chemicals that have been widely used in industrial and consumer products since the 1950s.
- We take an integrated whole of government approach where several agencies work together to investigate and monitor PFAS in the environment.
- The EPA website has information on 51 sites in NSW where PFAS were likely used.
- The EPA provides precautionary dietary advice to the community through the NSW Technical Advisory Group (TAG), comprised of NSW Government agency technical expertise.

NSW status and trend indicators

These indicators relate to regulation by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) of land classified as 'significantly contaminated' under the *Contaminated Land Management Act 1997*.

Indicator	Environmental status	Environmental trend	Information reliability
Number of regulated contaminated sites	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good
Number of sites where the regulation has ended*	 MODERATE	 Getting better Stable Getting worse	 Good

Indicator table scales

- **Environmental status:** Good, moderate, poor, unknown
- **Environmental trend:** Getting worse, stable, getting better, unknown
- **Information reliability:**  Good  Reasonable  Limited

Indicator definitions

Number of regulated contaminated sites – These sites are determined to be 'significantly contaminated' and requiring oversight by the EPA.

Number of sites where the regulation has ended – These sites are assessed as being no longer significant enough to warrant regulation by the EPA.