

Derwent Estuary Recreational Water Quality

Forecasting Trial



During the 2023-24 recreational water quality monitoring season, we will be conducting a forecasting trial here in the Derwent Estuary.

What is forecasting?

Forecasting of recreational water quality, is a prediction of the faecal pollution level expected at chosen swimming sites. The forecasts are updated daily, and is available to the swimming public via our [Beach Watch website](#).

Why are we interested in forecasting?

Forecasting helps overcome the issue of the time lag between our regular weekly water sampling (on Tuesdays) and when most people swim (i.e. weekends) by providing more timely communication. Daily forecasting also provides an avenue for sharing updates about sewage spills and other sudden changes to the water quality at our beaches. Overall, it empowers the swimming public to make informed decisions around swimming site suitability on any given day.

How does it work?

The forecasts are created by developing a rain threshold level for each site, which quantifies the amount of the rainfall likely to cause exceedances in the trigger levels outlined by the Tasmanian Recreational Water Quality Guidelines, and the duration of these exceedances at the respective sites. Daily rainfall data from the Bureau of Meteorology is then used to estimate whether pollution is Unlikely, Possible or Likely at individual swimming sites. Forecasting has been around for decades. We are trialling a simple method currently used for [Sydney's beaches and harbours](#).

Are you still testing the water?

Yes, forecasting will never replace the need for regular weekly water sampling. A forecast provides *additional*, timely and daily advice that *complements* sampling results, long-term ratings, and general advice.

Can I trust the forecasts?

The forecasts are predictions and may not be 100% accurate. It is important to make your own assessment of your surroundings when deciding whether to go swimming. Things to look for include discoloured water, anything floating or anything out of the ordinary. Swimming in the Derwent is not recommended for several days after heavy rain, and never in the vicinity of stormwater pipes or urban rivulets.

Are there forecasts available for the bay sites too?

No, only our 19 swimming sites are part of the 2023-24 forecasting trial.

What happens after the trial?

After the 2023-24 summer season we will assess what went well, what could be improved and what happens next. All decisions will be made in collaboration with estuary councils and the Department of Health.

For further information, comments and to provide feedback about the trial contact Derwent Estuary Program info@derwentestuary.org.au, ph 6231 1214.