

# Vanity's Crossing road closure – FAQs

February 2012

## 1. Why has Vanity's Crossing been closed?

Vanity's Crossing passes through the Cotter River, which has supplied drinking water to the ACT since the Territory's creation.

Vanity's Crossing has been closed to reduce the public health risk that it previously posed to the ACT drinking water supply. Some of the risks included contamination from the following sources.

- Dumping of vehicles.
- Lighting of fires.
- Human faeces and urine.
- Litter.
- Erosion caused by off-road vehicles.
- Vehicles driving through water (especially when the river is high).

The closure of Vanity's Crossing is a precautionary measure to reduce the likelihood of an event which would make the Cotter Reservoir unusable as a source of drinking water, such as a bushfire.

## 2. When was Vanity's Crossing closed?

Gates were installed on either side of the crossing on Tuesday 15 November 2011. These remained open until 6 February 2012, when they were locked to prevent vehicular access.

People can still access the area on foot or by bicycle. When accessing the area, people should be mindful of how their behaviour may impact on the water and surrounding environment. Signage will be in place to inform people of the closure and of the water quality issues at the site.

## 3. What is the ActewAGL Source Water Protection program?

ActewAGL is delivering a Source Water Protection program (SWPP), on behalf of ACTEW Corporation, to assist the community in protecting Canberra's drinking water catchments. Canberra's water security is a priority and with only a limited number of water sources available, ensuring they remain clean is very important.

The SWPP is a five-year program, which will run until mid-2013. The closure of Vanity's Crossing was a recommendation from the SWPP.

## 4. Is Vanity's Crossing the only road that has been closed?

Yes, Vanity's Crossing Road is the only road the SWPP has recommended for closure to protect public health. There are no plans to close other roads in the drinking water catchments at this time.

## 5. How long will Vanity's Crossing be closed for?

The closure of Vanity's Crossing to public vehicles is permanent.

## 6. What contaminants have entered the water catchment to warrant the closing of Vanity's Crossing?

ACTEW Corporation carries out regular inspections of the ACT's catchments to identify areas that may give rise to contaminants and that have the potential to impact negatively upon the safety of our drinking water.

The following contaminants have been identified at Vanity's Crossing.

- Faeces and urine from members of the public using the bushland around the crossing as a toilet.
- Petrochemicals from vehicles driving through the crossing, including both accidental spills and leaks, as well as incidental rinsing of chemicals into the river as vehicles drive through. There have been reports of drivers washing their vehicles at the crossing.
- Petrochemicals, heavy metals and other potentially dangerous chemicals from cars being dumped in the area. Currently there are abandoned cars in locations that will be under water once the Enlarged Cotter Dam is completed and the reservoir is filled to its new levels.
- Pathogen contamination from members of the public swimming and wading in the river. Pathogens have the potential to cause illness if they enter the water supply
- Litter, nappies and toilet paper left by members of the public using the area.
- Campfires lit in the area by members of the public. These create areas of bare ground, which can lead to erosion and also have the potential to cause bushfires.
- Damage to the crossing infrastructure due to inappropriate use by 4WD vehicles, which leads to erosion and the release of sediments into the water supply.

## 7. What is the difference between contamination from human faeces and animal faeces?

Contaminants from wild animal faeces are of very low concern when compared with those from humans. This is because wild animals have a low incidence of diseases that pose risks to human health. In contrast contamination by human faecal matter poses a significant public health risk due to the presence of pathogens and bacteria. Typically, domestic animals are more likely to carry human pathogens than wild ones.

## 8. Is Canberra water still safe to drink?

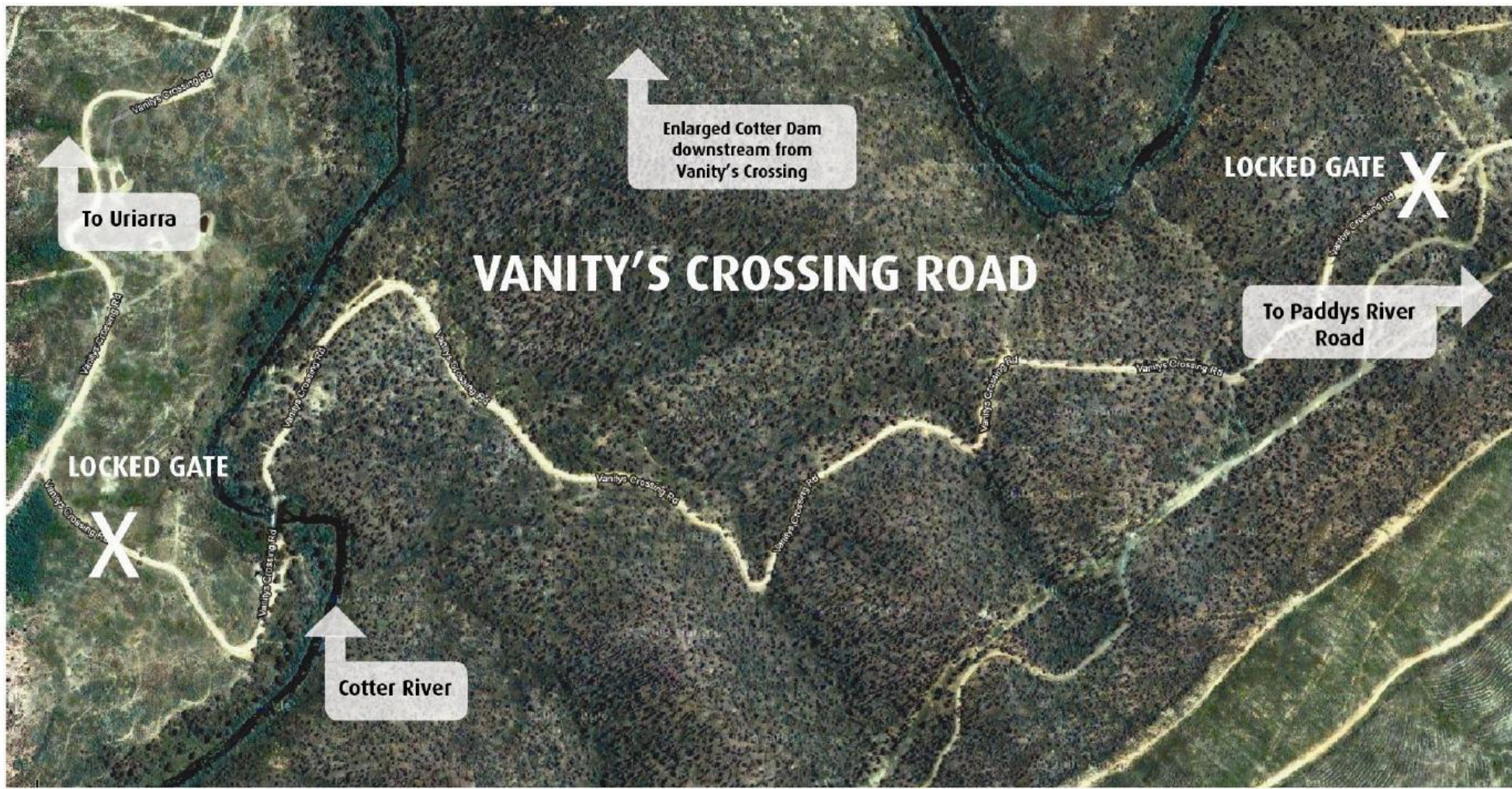
Yes. Canberra's drinking water is compliant with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is safe to drink. Canberra's treatment plants are equipped to treat water to the standards required by these guidelines.

More information on the quality of Canberra's drinking water can be found at [actewagl.com.au/water/quality/](http://actewagl.com.au/water/quality/)

## 9. Who do I contact for more information?

For information about the Source Water Protection program email [sourcewater@actewagl.com.au](mailto:sourcewater@actewagl.com.au)

For information about the road closure contact Canberra Connect on 13 22 81.



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ActewAGL Distribution ABN 76 670 568 688 a partnership of ACTEW Distribution Limited ABN 83 073 025 224 and Jemena Networks (ACT) Pty Ltd ABN 24 008 552 663.  
ActewAGL Distribution operates the water and wastewater assets of ACTEW Corporation Ltd ABN 86 069 381 980



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