

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 14 September 2026

It's raining plastic dust – from Melbourne to the Arctic Circle

Microplastics are falling from the sky around the world, according to a new global study that has detected small plastic particles raining down at 12 sampling sites across 9 countries and 3 continents.

The Plastic Dust Cloud Project, a study initiated by the Eurofins Microplastics Global Peer Group, detected the microplastics across environments in Melbourne, urban regions in the USA, European cities, and remote Arctic locations in northern Norway and Finland. Surprisingly, some rural sites recorded concentrations as high as some urban sites.

Dr Julia Jaeger, National Technical Manager at Eurofins Environment Testing Australia, said the question now was where the plastics came from.

"We found microplastics in every sample analysed," she said. "We hypothesise that it's coming from global background contamination, rather than a specific source point."

Dr Jaeger said there could be many sources of plastic contributing to this background contamination, including marine plastic, landfills, littering, and plastics used in agriculture. Over time, these plastics erode into smaller pieces that can be transported through the air.

"We can reliably analyse down to 20 micrometres, but that doesn't mean the particles stop there," she said. "The smaller we go, the more particles we find. Below that size, it becomes much more difficult to reliably analyse them, so there is still a lot that we don't know."

The findings raise questions about human exposure to airborne microplastics, but Dr Jaeger said this study did not investigate health effects. She said more research into exposure and toxicology is needed to understand what widespread atmospheric microplastics could mean for human and environmental health.

She will present the findings at the CleanUp 2026 conference in Adelaide.

CleanUp 2026 – the 11th International Contaminated Site Remediation Conference incorporating the 5th International PFAS Conference – is in Adelaide from 14 to 17 September. crcCARE is a partnership of organisations dedicated to developing new ways of dealing with and preventing contamination of soil, water and air.

The conference program is available [here](#).

Media enquires

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Presentation: Atmospheric microplastics are ubiquitous: evidence from a global study, 10:45 am Monday 14 September (Concurrent session, Adelaide Convention Centre)

Media: Complimentary, free media passes are available for any accredited media personnel who wish to attend the conference in person.