

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian invention wins prestigious award for using bubbles to tackle PFAS pollution worldwide

An Australian technology that is helping clean up PFAS-contaminated water worldwide has won the 2026 CARE Award at the 11th International CleanUp Conference in Adelaide.

Established in 1996, the CleanUp Conference is the original and longest-running International Remediation Conference and celebrated its 30th year in 2026.

Developed by EPOC Enviro, SAFF® (Surface-Active Foam Fractionation) removes PFAS from water using air bubbles. It then concentrates the recovered chemicals into a small volume of liquid for further management or destruction. The treated water can then be reused and is often discharged back to the environment. The award, presented by crcCARE, recognises sustainable innovations in assessing and cleaning up environmental contamination.

EPOC Enviro General Manager Jay Howland said the SAFF® solution to managing PFAS is uniquely sustainable because it is based on nature.

“The processes underpinning SAFF® exists in nature; we observed how rising air bubbles in a body of water create foam. We looked to the brilliance and simplicity of nature, and we mimicked this in our engineering designs.”

Mr Howland said another key benefit of the treatment was reducing the amount of PFAS-contaminated waste left to manage after treatment.

“SAFF® has the ability to not only separate PFAS from water, but to concentrate the recovered PFAS into very small volumes. This substantially reduces the amount of material that ultimately needs to be managed or destroyed.”

Mr Howland said the award recognised more than a decade of work.

“Winning the CARE Award is meaningful recognition of both our technology and our team. It is exciting to see this in practice because it is so effective and simple.”

PFAS contamination affects many types of water, from groundwater and landfill leachate to industrial wastewater. Removing the chemicals can help site operators manage contamination and protect waterways and surrounding environments.

EPOC Enviro has deployed 50 full-scale SAFF® systems across 75 sites on 4 continents. Together, the systems have treated more than 2 billion litres of PFAS-impacted water.

EPOC Enviro is now working towards larger treatment systems as demand for PFAS clean-up grows and regulations tighten. Mr Howland said the aim was to make treatment practical across a wide range of sites while accounting for what happens to the PFAS after it is removed from water.

“I'd like people to understand that PFAS remediation is not simply about making PFAS disappear. The challenge is to sustainably separate these persistent compounds from contaminated water, where they are present in very diluted concentrations, and then manage what you've recovered.”

The CARE Award was presented at the CleanUp 2026 Gala Dinner earlier this month.

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