

# PTA's Waters (Chemical) Proficiency Testing Program

## Customer Survey 2020 Outcome

### Introduction

Proficiency Testing Australia (PTA) conducted a survey of companies involved in the PTA Waters (Chemical) Proficiency Testing Program.

The aim of this survey was to obtain customer opinion and feedback concerning the PTA Waters Proficiency Testing Program. The survey was conducted between 26 October and 6 November 2020 by PTA's Quality Manager, using the on-line tool Survey Monkey. The contact person for each organisation was emailed information concerning the survey and how to participate on 26 October 2020.

Graphical summaries for each of the questions in the survey are presented in the **Results** section.

### Methods

The survey consisted of ten (10) questions, regarding the following subjects:

- Program quality.
- Suitability of samples.
- Evaluation of performance
- Timeliness of result notification
- Appropriateness of samples for Quality Control purposes
- Frequency of rounds
- Recommending the program to others.
- Other determinations to add to the program
- Determinations which could be deleted
- General comments.

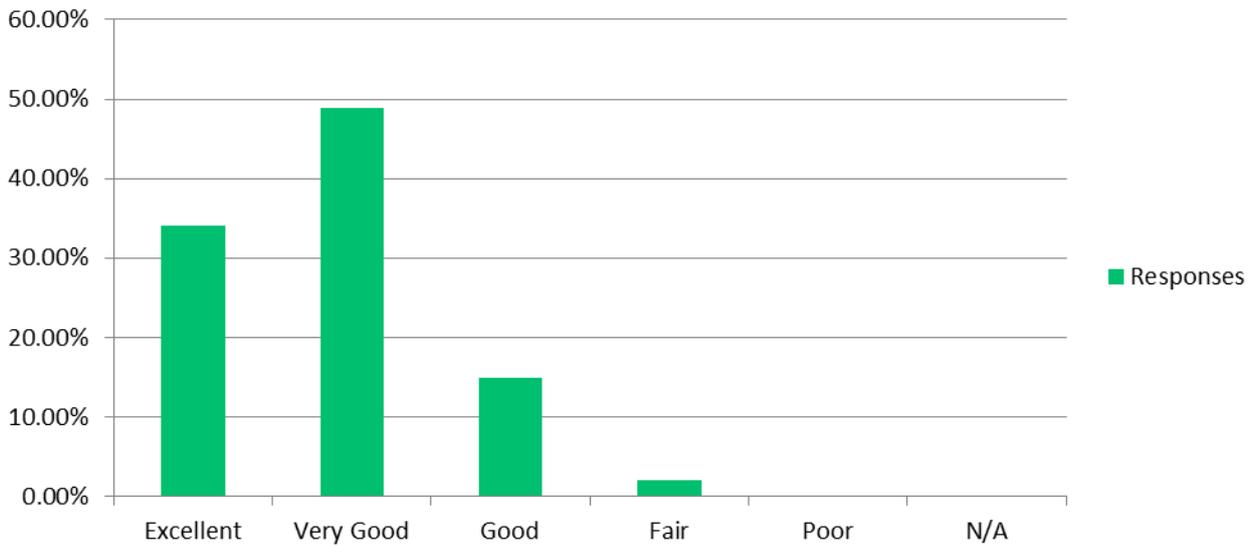
### Ranking

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- N/A (Not Applicable)

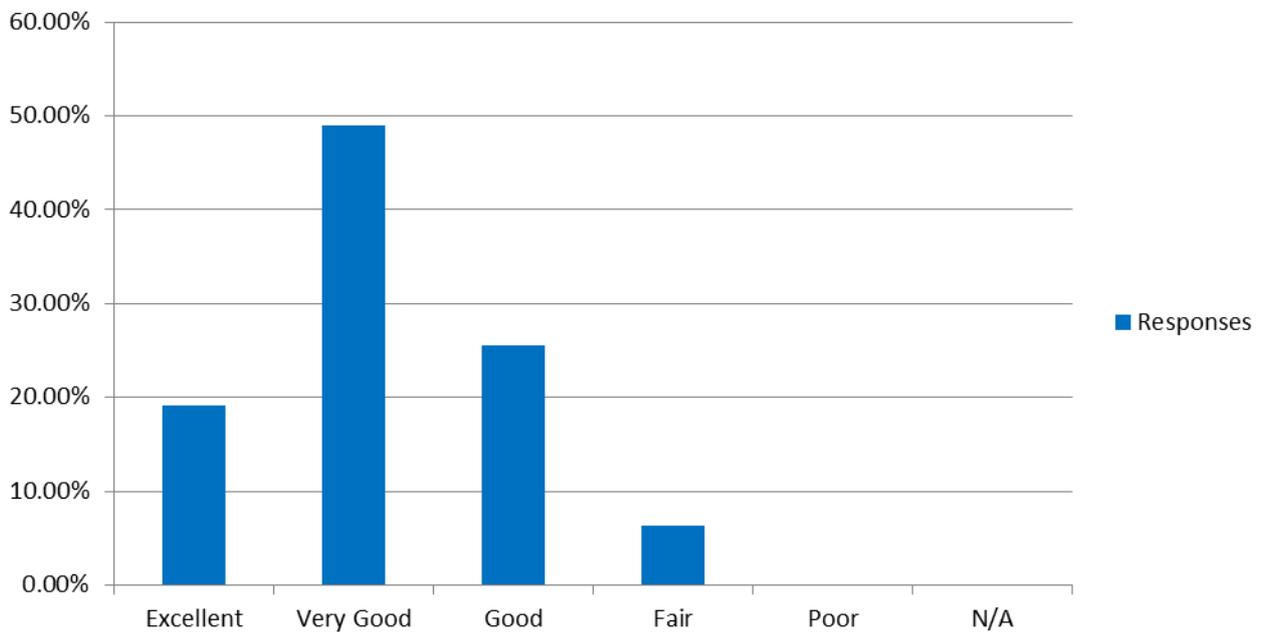
### Results

An email inviting participants to complete the survey was sent to a total of 81 organisations. Of these, 47 surveys were completed. This represents a 59% response rate.

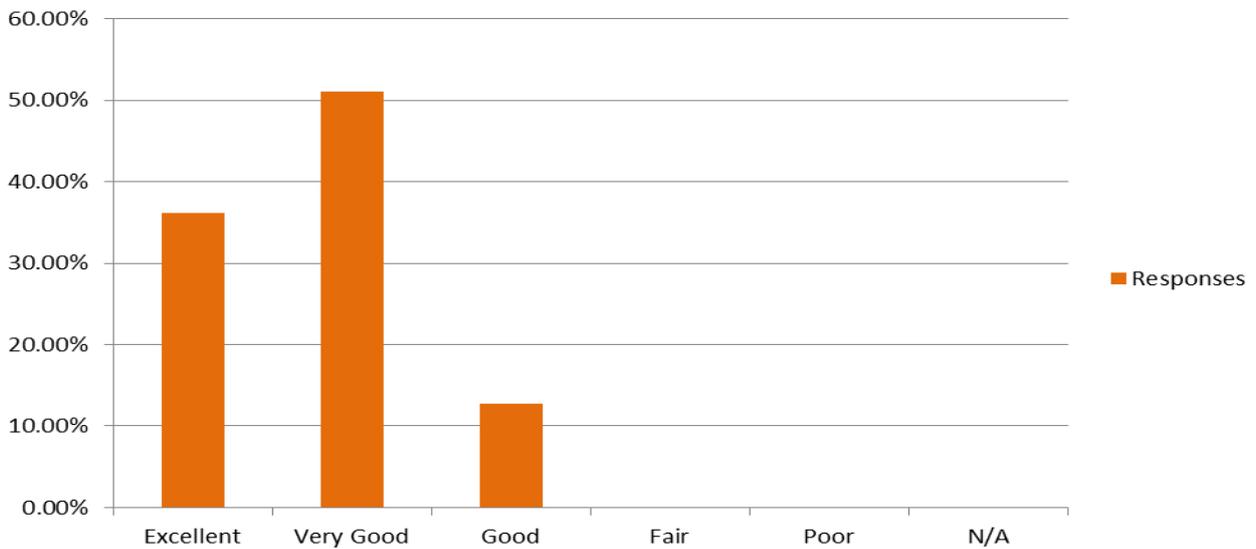
Q1. Based on your past participation, how would you rate the overall quality of PTA's Waters proficiency testing program?



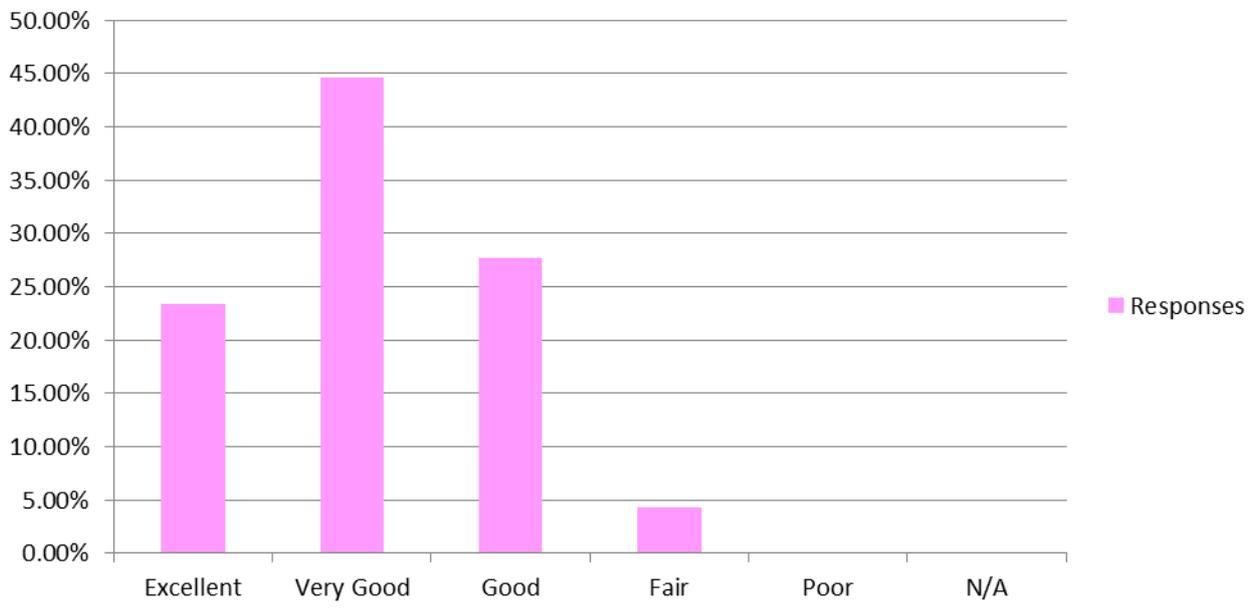
Q2. How do you rate the types of samples chosen in the Waters program to meet your needs?



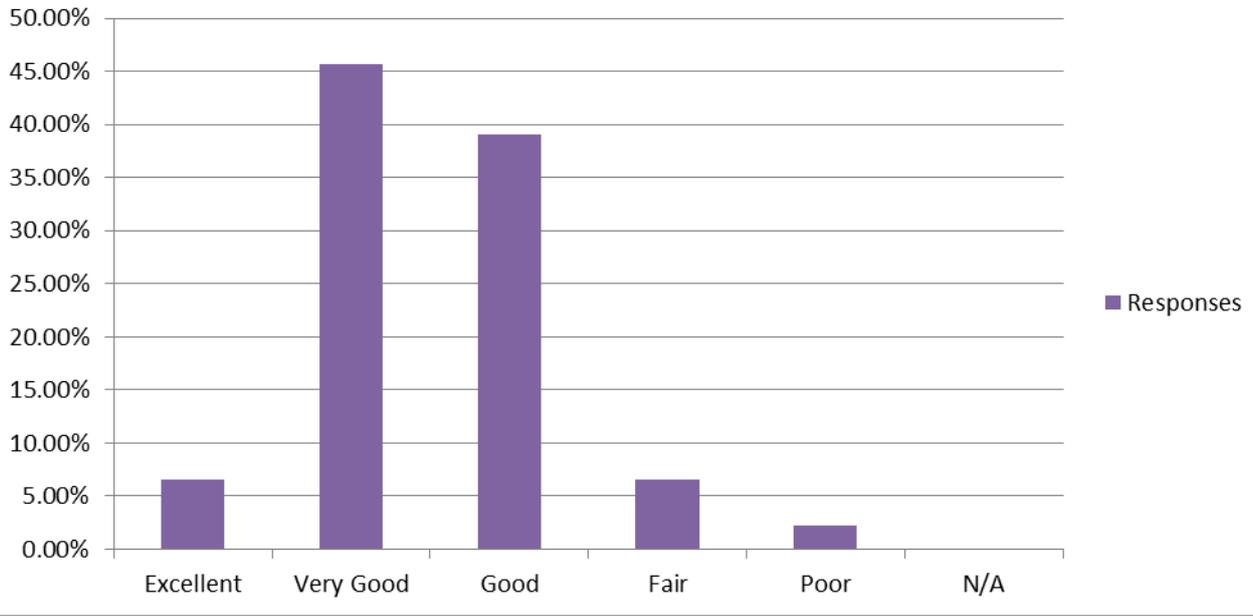
Q3. How would you rate the content of the Waters proficiency testing program Summary Sheets and Final Reports in providing you with an evaluation of your testing performance?



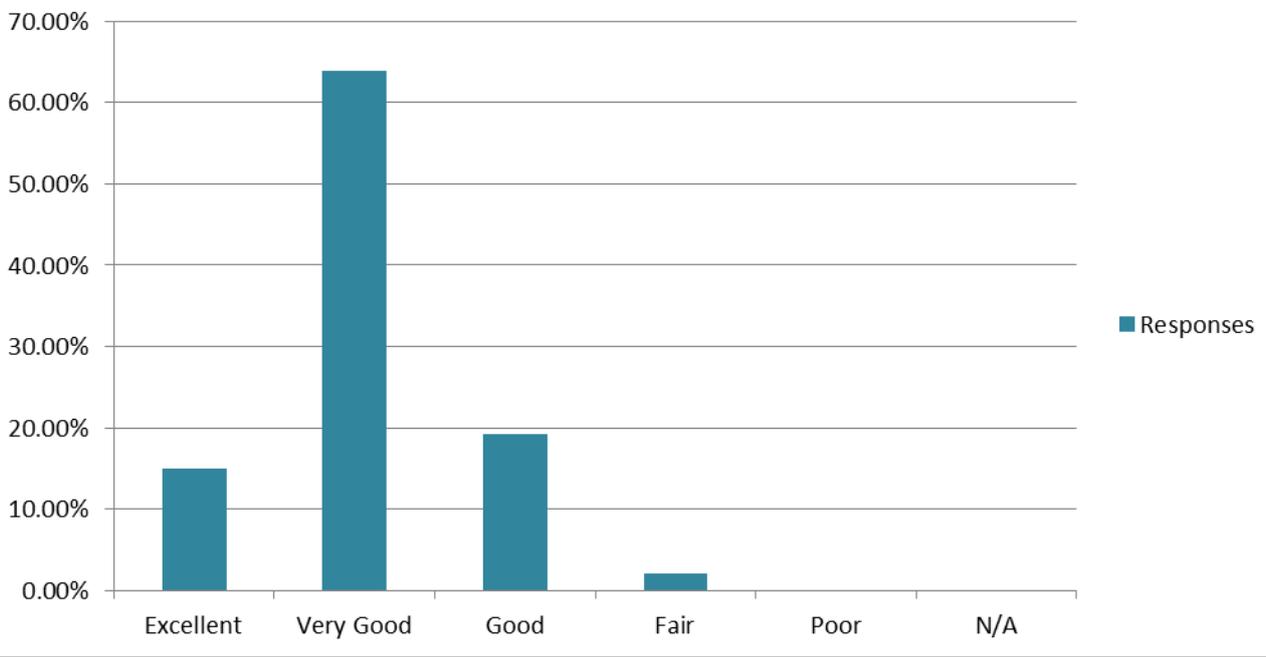
Q4. How would you rate the timeliness of result notification in the Waters program?

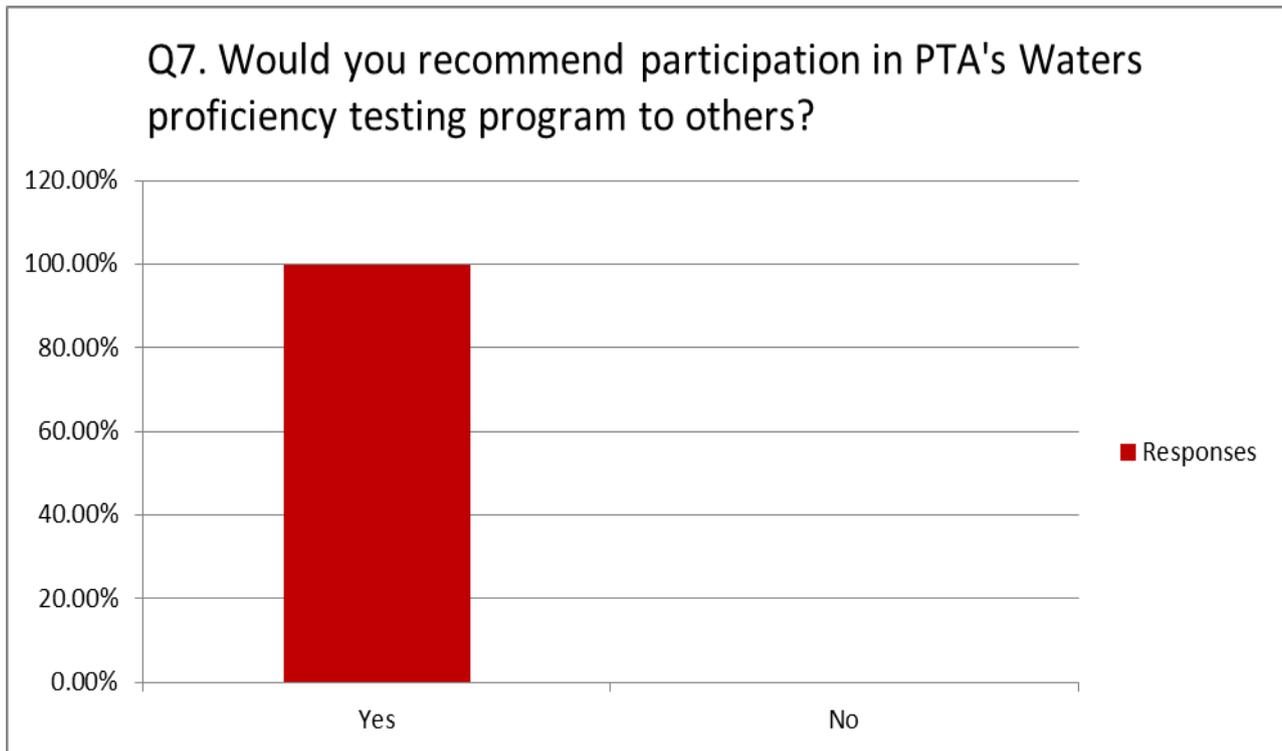


Q5. How appropriate are the concentration levels in the waters samples for your Quality Control purpose?



Q6. How appropriate is the frequency of rounds in the Waters program for your Quality Control purposes?





**Q8. Are there any determinations you would like to see included in the Waters program?**

Answered 35 (8 nil responses not displayed)  
 Skipped 12

*We take part specifically for total & WAD cyanide, free cyanide is being done to validate our test method. Current program is satisfactory for our need at this stage.*

*Microbiological Coliphage*

*We would like to see some more options for "real world" samples rather than just spiked water. We need to be able to make sure that matrix-effects have been mitigated in our methodologies*

*More information on the assessment of included MU for microbiology results.*

*Silicon & Cobalt*

*Oil in Water analysis is a different target oil than our method. It would be beneficial for us to have a PT round with an hydrocarbon oil spiked sample. We do not currently enrol so would need notification that it was hydrocabon based round of analysis*

*Chlorophyll a, Sulphide*

*Other labs results*

*We perform a very limited range of testing so the current program is sufficient. However, as we also measure free chlorine in the field, if there was a way to manage the short lifetime of the samples, we would be interested in that.*

*Surfactants.*

*The waters program meets my needs*

*chlorophyll a*

*microbiological : Salmonella chemical : Sulfite, Phosphate, dan Total Dissolved Solid*

*Low level (ppb) metals in water/salt water for ICPMS users*

*We test for pH and Conductivity mostly. Oil and Grease was a great inclusion into the SeaWaters program, though it was a shame that the analyte for the Oil & Grease was not Crude Oil or a similar petroleum based hydrocarbon.*

*Stable Strontium about 8mg/L- similar to Seawater*

*Total hardness, TDS*

*Acidity (APHA 2310)*

*No... it is quite comprehensive as far as our lab is concerned*

*In future, PTA can open proficiency program for E.Coli Coliforms (Enzyme Substrate Method) in drinking water and portable water or fresh water using method APHA 9223 D.*

*TPH in water*

*Hexavalent chromium*

*A wider variety of analytes at levels that are more appropriate to drinking water levels - measurable, but lower. I don't think anyone ever sees 10 mg/L Ag or 15 mg/L Mn in their water, for instance. I would prefer to see 10 to 100 µg/L. I would like to see elements like Be, Hg, Sn, and U included - all at reasonably easy measurable levels (e.g., 10 - 100 µg/L).*

*So far no parameters*

*Pesticides SVOCs*

*Nil extra - All covered atm*

*Methyldiethanolamine*

*PFAS*

## Q9 Are there any determinations in the Waters program you consider redundant and should not be included in future rounds?

Answered 24 (18 nil responses not displayed)

Skipped 23

*Satisfactory for the round we are taking part in as noted above (8.)*

*Not really*

*As mentioned above, pH and Conductivity, as well as Oil & Grease, are of most interest to us.*

*I only use K and conductivity (which was not there in this sample)*

*Sulphate*

*All good*

## Q10 Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Answered 30 (10 nil responses not displayed)

Skipped 17

*All result sheets are good. Thanks*

*In additional to the full & detail final report, can we have a Laboratory Summary Sheet as early information concerning our performance as provided for Round 163 in 2014, Report No. 855 for our future programs?*

*The frequency of some tests are quite high and often the number of participants are low, it would be worth assessing who is participating and whether it would make more sense to offer only once per year. It would be great if the trials could offer a larger suite of analytes. It is quite expensive to participate in PT programmes and it is more time efficient (from a time perspective) to cover more analytes in each trial. It would also be great if we could submit results electronically rather than using handwritten results sheets.*

*We have a very limited need for general water PTs in our lab but are very pleased with the timeframes of the PTA Waters program*

*Sometimes the volume of samples provided is very low considering analysis required.*

*Excellent communication and feedback provided around dispatch of samples and responding to queries etc.*

*Customer service is always excellent. Delfina, Kathy & Christine always try to be helpful.*

*Samples observed having precipitation that do not mix/dissolve*

*With regards to the Physical Parameters, Anions and Cations round, we would appreciate a larger volume of sample if possible. We use titration to determine Total Alkalinity and Chloride, so dependant on the concentration of the sample we sometimes need to repeat the analysis to ensure*

*an optimal titre. Combined with TDS and TS determinations, we find that we are unable to repeat any analysis due to limited sample volume. I appreciate the great customer service provided to us by Delfina. Especially a reminder if I have forgotten to submit results during the craziness of 2020! Overall we are very happy with PTA's Water Proficiency Testing Program. Thank you!*

*The concentrations of analytes were too high for us. We normally analyse at ug/L not mg/L*

*Include Clostridium perfringens spores, and phage (Coliphage and F Rnase) testing to your programme.*

*Program is well run and efficient*

*Delfina Mihaila is great with communication and responding, very professional and knowledgeable.*

*I hope that next year there will be more analysis parameters as needed*

*Frequency seems to be less than chemical analysis. We would participate more if there were more programs available.*

*All good, well informed by Delfina*

*Very happy with the PTA program however the cost for each one is getting very expensive for smaller labs like ours. Also, the invoicing team needs to make sure that they include our PO no. on each invoice as our systems will not pay the invoice unless it is shown on the invoice.*

*The programme is useful (and necessary) in complying with accreditation and we'll definitely continue to participate.*

*Good PT program.*

*Would you be able to organise similar proficiency testing program in soil/ solid matrices?*

## **Discussion**

Customer satisfaction with PTA's Waters (Chemical) proficiency testing program falls mostly within the "Excellent" to "Good" categories for most questions. This is a very pleasing result. Some questions returned responses in the "Fair" to "Poor" range which suggests that the program may not be appropriate for all users and the comments submitted gave valuable feedback concerning the areas of concern. Concentration levels and sample types are areas which need review, along with the frequency of rounds and timeliness of result notification.

**PTA would like to extend a big thank you to all the participants of this survey. Your feedback will assist us in improving our proficiency testing programs. Please contact PTA - [ptaenquiry@pta.asn.au](mailto:ptaenquiry@pta.asn.au) for further information on the Waters program.**