

Suspect water taken for sale

Paul Weston

WATER trucks have been taking domestic supplies from springs near where contaminated groundwater was found at Kingaroy, locals claim.

The residents claim contractors took water from a main spring inside a marked 2km exclusion zone soon after farmers were ordered to shut down their bores after toxic chemicals benzene and toluene were found.

Kingaroy farmer Wendy Buttsworth said she saw water trucks work last weekend, 24 hours after farmers were first warned to move their cattle and close off bores.

Fearful the water was contaminated, Mrs Buttsworth (pictured) approached a contractor, who argued that the spring was fine and he had permission to use it.

Mrs Buttsworth said the contractor told her: "I've got 2000 clients who need water. It's going into their tanks."

She said a Department of Environment and

Resource Management officer she contacted expressed shock the spring was in use.



Local farmer Damien O'Sullivan said he knew of two contractors using the spring.

"I spoke to them and they said the water has been tested," Mr O'Sullivan said.

"I wouldn't draw water out of here. We haven't got any confidence in the safety of our water now."

A DERM spokesman said officers had advised water contractors not to take water from inside the 2km exclusion zone until further notice.

Carol Hancock, who operates a water carting business with her husband Ken, said their trucks were allowed to operate about 2km outside the exclusion zone.

She was aware of complaints to DERM but said farmers were confused about where the trucks were obtaining water.

"Where we are carting out water isn't within the exclusion zone. We're taking it from a tank in the vicinity and not from the spring," she said.

Another contractor, Matt Lonsdale, said his company had taken water from within the exclusion zone but was drawing it for septic tanks, not human consumption.

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