

**Question 1. When did the ADF first become aware that toxic chemicals from firefighting foam - PFOS and PFOA - were being used at defence bases?**

**Question 2. When did the use of this foam stop?**

**ANSWER Q1 and Q2:**

Australian and international civilian and military authorities used firefighting foams containing per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), including perfluorooctane (per-floo-row-ok-tane) sulfonate (sul-fon-ate) (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic (per-floo-row-ok-tan-oh-eek) acid (PFOA) due to their effectiveness in extinguishing liquid fuel fires.

Defence commissioned an internal report in 2003 which provided an overview of knowledge available at the time regarding environmental issues associated with the use of AFFF products containing PFOS and PFOA. In response, Defence changed its practice and use of what are now legacy AFFF products.

Defence then transitioned to a new, more environmentally friendly product called Ansulite.

Defence no longer maintains stocks of these legacy aqueous film forming foams and has undertaken a comprehensive program of disposal using licensed facilities.

**QUESTION 3. When did the ADF become aware that these chemicals had infected the water supply?**

**ANSWER Q3:**

Defence understands that PFOS and PFOA has not been detected in the Toowoomba Regional Council water supply. Questions about this should be directed to the Council.

At Army Aviation Centre Oakey (AACO), the transition to Ansulite began in 2005.

Routine environmental testing was undertaken on base at AACO, not off base. In 2012, perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) were detected in the base pool and groundwater samples taken from monitoring wells on base showed concentrations of PFOS and PFOA.

A community information session was held in December 2012 and the base population was informed as well.

As a precaution, properties near the base were advised not to use bore water for drinking.

A detailed investigation is being conducted on and in the vicinity of Army Aviation Centre – Oakey. These investigations are undertaken in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework.

As part of these investigations, an Environmental Site Assessment has been completed, which shows the extent of PFOS and PFOA detection in groundwater beneath the area. The results of the Environmental Site Assessment were explained in detail at community information sessions on 27 and 28 July 2016.

**QUESTION 4. When did the ADF inform local residents about this situation?**

**ANSWER Q4:**

Information about PFOS and PFOA and proposed groundwater sampling locations, including off-site bores, was provided to Oakey residents at a community information session held in December 2012. As a precautionary measure, properties near the base were advised not to use bore water for drinking.

The Oakey Environmental Site Assessment Report was released in July 2016 and is available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Oakey/Documents.asp>

**QUESTION 5. What is the next step going forward?**

**ANSWER Q5:**

Defence is actively looking at options to address management of these compounds on and in the vicinity of the Army Aviation Base at Oakey.

Defence is finalising a human health risk assessment and ecological risk assessment for the Oakey environmental investigations. Both of these reports will be finalised by the end of September 2016. The results of both assessments will assist Defence and the Queensland Government to determine next steps. Defence will consult with the community at the earliest opportunity once both reports have been finalised.

The Australian Government will further consider the matter of property acquisition once interim health reference values have been established and detailed environmental investigations are concluded.

The Government has announced that it will invest \$55 million to manage PFAS contamination at Defence bases including an epidemiological study that will look at potential patterns, causes and health effects in communities exposed to elevated levels of PFAS. The Government will also fund voluntary blood testing, specialised mental health and counselling services and dedicated Community Liaison Officers for communities affected by contamination at Defence bases.

The Government will also bring the issue of PFAS contamination to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) so governments at all levels have a consistent approach to managing potentially contaminated sites.

At a Commonwealth level, the Department of Health (Health) is coordinating a whole-of-Government approach to managing and responding to this issue. Health will be leading an interagency group building upon a technical interdepartmental working group that was established in December 2014 to address the environmental and potential health impacts of PFAS contamination.

The Department of the Environment and Energy is working with Defence and other key agencies to develop interim environmental management guidance on the management of PFAS contamination on Commonwealth sites.

The Government will ensure that these commitments are implemented as soon as possible.