

Response sent to journalist
29 August 2016

Questions:

I'm check in to see whether a date has been set for the next consultation meeting regarding testing at Albatross.

What areas have been tested so far at Albatross base or surrounding areas?

What have the initial results found (I was told these would be back by late July)?

Has another consultation date been set?

Is more testing happening, if so when (can we come down and get shots?)

Response:

Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation at HMAS Albatross in May 2016. The investigation is expected to be complete in the first half of 2017. As Defence receives verified results for HMAS Albatross, it will make these results available to relevant landholders and state authorities.

The findings of the report and the next steps will be discussed at the next community information session to be held at HMAS Albatross in September 2016. Advice will be provided to the community when a meeting date is confirmed. This will enable the community to ask questions and for Defence to work with local residents to share information. Defence remains committed to being open and transparent with local communities during the investigations.

Background:

Specialised Aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) was used for nearly 50 years across a range of military bases, civilian aerodromes and industrial facilities around Australia for critical national defence and other purposes to rapidly extinguish liquid fuel fires. Chemicals in the older fire fighting foams - in particular, Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), PFOS and PFOA - were also used in a range of industrial, commercial and domestic products.

In 2003 Defence became aware that this was an emerging contaminant. In 2004 Defence commenced transitioning away from the legacy fire fighting foam to a new product. The product currently used by Defence has significantly reduced environmental impact and does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients.

Defence has been proactive in initiating an environmental program to investigate the extent and levels of PFOS and PFOA on, and in the vicinity of, some of its bases around Australia.

As well as a number of detailed environmental site investigations already underway, a preliminary sampling program has also commenced at a number of sites.

Defence is continuing to work with Commonwealth, State and local authorities to investigate this legacy issue. This issue is not unique to Defence.

Most people living in developed nations will have some level of PFOS and PFOA in their body as these chemicals were also used in common household and industrial applications, such as in the manufacture of non-stick cookware, fabric, furniture and

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carpet stain protection applications, food packaging and in some industrial processes.

According to the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) Perfluorinated Chemicals Guidance Statements released on 16 March 2016, there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. Because these compounds persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure is minimised as a precaution.

The enHealth Guidance Statements are available from the Department of Health at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlthpublicat-environ.htm>

Defence has established a national website to facilitate access to information regarding its PFOS and PFOA investigation program:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/id/PFOSPFOA/Default.asp>

Defence has also established a national telephone number: 1800 365 414 and email address: PFCDefenceCoordination@golder.com.au

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