

1. Will testing be carried out in any bores at the Gingin air base and surrounding properties?

Defence is assessing the Gingin satellite airfield as a site for consideration, including a review of the historic AFFF use and an assessment of the likely use of surface water or groundwater within the vicinity of Gingin Airfield. This assessment will determine if any further action is required, such as sampling and further investigations.

2. Have Gingin residents been invited to the meeting in Bullsbrook on Thursday?

Community notices were placed in the *Northern Valley* and *Advocate* local newspapers for the RAAF Base Pearce Community Information Session, being held on 23 June 2016.

Defence takes this matter very seriously and is committed to ensuring the safety of both Defence personnel and the community.

Defence continues to work co-operatively with the Commonwealth, Western Australian state and local authorities, and the local community on this issue

Background Information

Specialised Aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) was used for nearly 50 years across a range of major 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 that same year, Defence released a specification for the supply and testing of AFFF concentrates.

The product currently used by Defence is a more environmentally safe product 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 carpet stain protection applications, food packaging and in some industrial processes.

Response provided to journalist
21 June 2016

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-publth-publicat-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