

**1. Could I ask if testing has unearthed any contamination issues at HMAS Cerberus?**

**2. What happens if something is found?**

**3. How is testing being conducted?**

Defence will begin a preliminary sampling program at HMAS Cerberus in the next fortnight. The purpose of the preliminary sampling is to understand if PFOS and PFOA are present on, or in the vicinity of, the base.

At this stage, the intent is to take six samples from a combination of private bores and surface water sources at or beyond the boundary of HMAS Cerberus. All samples will be collected by qualified contractors engaged by Defence.

The outcomes of the preliminary sampling will be made available to Defence in late August 2016. Subject to what is found, a detailed site investigation may follow.

Land owners were formally notified that sampling would take place in late May/early June. Land owners were also advised that a Defence contractor would be in contact to arrange permission to be granted access to each site.

All land owners were invited to contact the Senior ADF Officer, HMAS Cerberus if they had any questions. Land owners were also provided supporting factsheets that would provide further advice on the sampling process.

Further, Defence initiated a community notice in order to ensure transparency across the community.

Defence continues to be committed to working collaboratively with local communities, State/Territory Government, local councils, commonwealth entities and other stakeholders to address this complex issue.

Defence representatives briefed the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council in February 2016. During discussions, Defence offered information on the sampling process.

**Background:**

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.

Response provided to journalist  
7 June 2016

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.

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](mailto:PFCDefenceCoordination@golder.com.au)