

Response provided to journalist
22 November 2016

Questions:

I'm following up a story about a family in Williamstown who have had their son's blood tested, and discovered high levels of PFAS in his blood, which they say is from firefighting foam used on the RAAF base at Williamstown.

I'm seeking a comment from the Department of Defence in regards to this – I know there is quite a bit of information about this online but I'm hoping you can comment on this case in particular.

Response:

Defence is not an authority on health and cannot comment on individual cases.

Questions relating to human health should be directed to the Department of Health.

The Government has committed to investing \$55 million from the existing Defence budget to manage, contain and remediate PFAS contamination at Defence bases. This includes funding an epidemiological study to be led by the Department of Health that will look at potential patterns, causes and health effects in communities exposed to elevated levels of PFAS.

The Government is establishing a voluntary blood testing program for residents living within the investigation areas at Williamstown and Oakey with the ability to expand the program where clear exposure pathways have been identified and endorsed by the Department of Health.

In the interim, Defence has established arrangements to reimburse individuals in the Williamstown and Oakey environmental investigation areas who have already obtained PFAS blood tests, and to meet the costs of PFAS blood testing for individuals in the Oakey and Williamstown environmental investigation areas who wish to obtain a blood test prior to the Commonwealth-funded voluntary blood testing program commencing.

Those who would like to be involved in the epidemiological study will be given an option to allow the researchers to use their blood test results. Including all available blood test results in the study will help to assess possible associations between PFAS exposure and potential health effects.

Further information on Health's voluntary blood testing program can be found at:
<https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm>

The enHealth Guidance Statements are available from the Department of Health at
[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-publicat-
environ.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-publicat-environ.htm)