

Response provided to journalist
22 November 2016

QUESTION

As mentioned residents at Williamstown are calling for further testing about how PFOS and PFOA are spread.

I think through independent tests (but commissioned by Defence and overseen by Defence. Laverty pathology has been doing it)... some have elevated levels of PFOS in their blood despite not drinking the water and eating produce.

One baby, who has not ever drunk water or eaten produce, also has elevated levels. They're concerned it's spreading in other ways now.

It would be great to get a response about whether health would consider testing to see alternate ways of it spreading.

Also, residents have told me Minister Payne and other members in Defence encouraged them to put in claims for business lost due to the PFOS issue.

They did that about 6 months ago and nothing happened.

The residents say they've been told 1) That the 2005 compensation legislation does not cover them and 2) that it won't work now they're part of the class action.

Could you please verify these details for me?

RESPONSE

Defence understands the community's concerns in relation to PFAS exposure on people is a significant concern, especially in children. Defence's priority remains the health and safety of the community and understanding the management of potential impacts of PFAS exposure on the community and its environment. Defence shares the concerns of the community of which Defence and Defence personnel are apart of.

Under the environmental investigations conducted by Defence, which were undertaken in accordance with the National Environmental Protection Measure for contaminated sites, a Human Health Risk Assessment was completed for the Williamstown Investigation Area and was released in August 2016. The Human Health Risk Assessment identified the significant exposure pathways through which people could be exposed to PFAS, and steps that could be taken to minimise exposure. This included the examination of a range of possible pathways, and not just the ingestion of PFAS impacted water and produce grown in the area.

The potential exposure pathways that were considered included ingestion, skin contact and/or inhalation of impacted materials such as:

- groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment and dust;
- home-grown produce including beef and chicken eggs and honey;
- seafood; and
- breast milk.

Risks from the following pathways are low and acceptable:

- inhalation of dust from soil irrigated with groundwater;
- incidental or unintentional ingestion and dermal contact with surface water and groundwater – pools, dams surface water bodies;
- incidental ingestion and dermal contact of soil and sediment in outdoor activities; and
- consumption of locally sourced seafood including finfish, prawns, crabs and oysters.

Additionally, in the Southern Area, possible risks may result from upper level exposure for:

- incidental or unintentional ingestion of groundwater while showering, bathing, use in pools or sprinkler play;
- eating large quantities of eggs from backyard chickens; and
- ingestion of large quantities of locally grown beef.

Response provided to journalist
22 November 2016

Defence is working with the Department of Health and medical experts to ensure that the community are being provided with the most relevant and up-to-date information and health advice relating to PFAS.

For information regarding exposure pathways to PFAS, please refer to the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\) FactSheet](#).

The Human Health Risk Assessment is available at
<http://www.defence.gov.au/id/Williamstown/Documents.asp>

In addition, please find the below statement in response to your enquiry regarding the class action:

A class action was filed in the Federal Court of Australia and served on the Commonwealth on 2 November 2016 for alleged losses arising from Defence's historic use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam products at RAAF Base Williamtown.

The Commonwealth will comply with any orders and directions issued by the Federal Court in this matter.