

**Has Ellen Brook been tested for the presence of foam contaminants? If yes, what were the results? If no, why not?**

**Have you found any evidence of contamination of surface water in other off-site areas around the air base? If yes, please provide details of the locations and results.**

Defence commenced an environmental investigation at RAAF Base Pearce in May 2016 to understand the extent and levels of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) including perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) on, and in the vicinity of, the base.

The investigation will be undertaken in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework. The first stage of the NEPM process, the preliminary site investigation (PSI), was completed in August 2016. The Preliminary Site Investigation Report can be found at: [www.defence.gov.au/id/pearce/](http://www.defence.gov.au/id/pearce/)

Testing to date has been on ground water only.

The second stage of the NEPM process, the Detailed Site Investigation, commenced in September 2016 and is expected to be complete in the first half of 2017. The Detailed Site Investigation will include:

- o Comprehensive sampling, which will include on and off-base sampling in soil, groundwater, surface water and drainage lines to further assess the nature and extent of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, the base.
- o Investigating and modelling how PFAS moves through the environment and preparing the detailed site investigation report.

A Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment will be conducted if required based on the results of the Detailed Site Investigation.

Off-base sampling to be undertaken for the Detailed Site Investigation at RAAF Base Pearce will include surface water, sediment and biota sampling at the Ellen and Ki-it Monger Brooks.

Defence remains committed to being open and transparent with local communities during the investigations. Once the Detailed Site Investigation is complete, Defence will provide the sampling results to local and state authorities and will engage with the local community on these results at the earliest opportunity.

**What data led the Department of Defence to set a 3km distance from RAAF Pearce to provide free drinking water for residents?**

The 3km criterion was established as an interim criterion for all bases pending the outcome of the PFAS Environmental Investigations. As at 29 September 2016, 64 households are receiving water assistance in the vicinity of RAAF Base Pearce.

The Australian Government's priority remains the health and safety of the community and the management of potential impacts of PFAS exposure on the environment. The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) advises that there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFAS causes adverse human health effects. Because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution.

As a precaution, and irrespective of any actual measured concentrations in bore water, Defence is supplying residents within the vicinity of the Base that use bore water for drinking or to prepare food, with an alternative water supply for drinking and domestic use.

The provision of alternative water supplies by Defence will be reviewed on completion of the Investigation, or sooner if information obtained during the Investigation suggests such a review is warranted. It will also be reviewed once Australian health reference values are available.

**Do you advise residents around RAAF Pearce to eat their home-produced eggs and vegetables?**

Questions regarding human health should be directed to the Western Australian state health authorities.

Defence is not aware of any advice that has been provided by the Western Australian Government on restricting consumption of eggs, vegetables and crops in the vicinity of RAAF Base Pearce.

***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. From 2004, Defence transitioned to a new product called Ansulite for use on the Defence estate. 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 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 and updated on 24 June 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-publthpublicat-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)