

**Response provided to journalist
2 September 2016**

Questions:

We are (compiling) a story about the Oakey air base, focusing on the ongoing issues residents in the area face because of their water and land being contaminated with PFOS and PFOA.

We have also interviewed Erin Brockovich who has teamed up with Shine Lawyers in Queensland to assist the class action that is taking place.

Does Defence have anything to say about this contamination issue?

Response to all:

The Government acknowledges that this is a particularly challenging time for the Oakey community. The Government also recognises the concerns of the Oakey community and will continue to communicate openly with the community.

The Government committed to investing \$55 million from the existing Defence budget to manage, contain and remediate perfluorinated chemical (PAFS) 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 PFOS and PFOA.

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

The Government is establishing dedicated mental health and counseling services in all affected communities and appoint a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to connect residents to these services, who will be in place during September.

The Department of Defence is providing drinking water to a number of residents in the vicinity of the Army Aviation Centre Oakey and will, in consultation with Toowoomba Regional Council, look at any further needs. As at 30 August 2016, Defence is providing water for 35 properties.

Environmental Site Assessment

The Oakey environmental site assessment was released to the public on 27 July 2016. The environmental site assessment report describes the location of, and the method used to collect a range of samples including soil, sediment, groundwater and surface water samples. The environmental site assessment report includes details of the sampling undertaken including soil, groundwater, sediment and surface water sampling. The report is being used to inform the human health risk assessment and an ecological risk assessment.

Human Health Risk Assessment

The Oakey human health risk assessment will be released on 5 September 2016. The human health risk assessment report and recommendations will be made available to the community via a community presentation in Oakey on the evening of 5 September and community drop-ins on 6 September. Hard copies of the report will be available at Jondaryan Shire Library and Toowoomba Library, and the report will also be available electronically on the Defence PFAS website after its public release.

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The objective of the human health risk assessment is to assess the possible human health risks through exposure to soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, plants and animals in the Investigation Area.

The report will assist the Queensland State Government to determine any appropriate management measures that may be required including ongoing monitoring and further sampling.

Defence will ensure the human health risk assessment is reviewed in light of any new information or regulatory changes.

Defence is working with Federal, state and local authorities to understand the full scope of the issue and to consider future management and remediation options.

The Government will consider the matter of property acquisition once interim health reference values have been established and detailed environmental investigations are concluded.

Shine Lawyers

Defence is aware of recent correspondence from Shine Lawyers to residents in the Oakey community.

Shine Lawyers has acted independently with this correspondence. There are no arrangements between Defence and Shine Lawyers.

There is also no arrangement between Defence and any local pathology provider concerning blood testing.

Defence encourages people from the Oakey community who live or work (have lived or worked) in the investigation area and wish to have their blood sampled, to participate in the upcoming Federal Department of Health blood sampling programme and epidemiological study, which is expected to begin later this month.

Blood testing

Defence is aware of questions from the community that that blood testing will only be available for a limited time, this is not the case. Defence has not provided a limited time for blood testing.

Defence encourages people from the Oakey community who live or work/have lived or worked in the investigation area and wish to have their blood sampled, to participate in the upcoming Federal Department of Health blood sampling programme and epidemiological study, which is expected to begin later this month.

The epidemiological study will help authorities better understand the potential impacts of PFAS to human health. Defence will not have access to the blood test results of individuals.

If, however, individuals still wish to have their blood tested prior to the establishment of the programme they can and will have that expense reimbursed by Defence.

Defence recommends that those seeking to have their blood sampled attend a pre- and post-general medical practitioner appointment for medical advice on the process which will also be reimbursed by Defence.

Remediation

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Managing the contamination is a key priority for Defence and trials on a number of remediation and management techniques are underway to progress this including:

- Ongoing remediation and management trials (Solidification, Stabilisation, and Foam Separation);
- Commencement of groundwater remediation through pilot trials; and
- Continuing to assess international remediation capabilities.

Defence is also examining what steps might be appropriate to manage better the movement of PFAS from the base in surface water carried in local drains.