

Question:

Do the initial firefighting foam contamination results still fall under the 'safe level' after the department of health lowered their levels of safe exposure?

Response:

The Commonwealth Department of Health released the final Health Based Guidance Values (HBGVs) for PFAS on 3 April 2017. These HBGVs were developed by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) at the request of Department of Health and replace the interim Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) guidance values released in June 2016.

The HBGVs for PFAS are a precautionary measure to assist people, investigating agencies and affected communities in minimising their exposure to PFAS. Specifically, these final values will be utilised by Defence to assess risk and take further action as necessary.

Current and future Defence investigations and assessments, including those for HMAS Albatross, will now adopt the FSANZ guidance values in place of the enHealth interim values.

To date, 64 groundwater samples have been collected. When applying the interim enHealth guidance values, three of these samples were above the drinking water guideline. When applying the FSANZ HBGVs, the number exceeding guidelines doesn't change.

Defence is committed to engaging with the local community regarding the environmental investigations. Further information on the environmental investigation that will commence at HMAS Albatross can be found at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Albatross/>