

Question:

Hi we've been writing in stories that Defence ceased use of PFAS and PFOS foams in 2007 (from memory). Is this correct what the Greens are saying? That's it's still in use up north?

Response:

From 2004, the Department of Defence commenced phasing out its use of legacy aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) containing perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) as active ingredients and progressively transitioned to a more environmentally friendly and less persistent product called Ansolite for use on the Defence estate. The product currently used by Defence does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients and only contains trace elements of the chemicals.

Ansolite is only used by the Department of Defence in emergency situations where human life is at risk, or in controlled environments to test equipment. Any Ansolite used for testing is captured and treated and/or disposed of at licensed waste disposal facilities. When conducting exercises Defence undertakes simulations without foam discharge.

Defence has commissioned various comparative studies to understand the relative toxicity of different AFFF products. One such study conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE) to compare the toxicity, persistence and bioaccumulation of Ansolite and Solberg RF6, which is used at most civilian airports in Australia. The study found that in laboratory conditions Ansolite was less toxic than Solberg to all test organisms used in the study. In general, it was found that Solberg was at least 10 times more toxic than Ansolite.

Defence continues to be proactive in initiating a program of investigations to identify the extent and levels of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, some bases. Further information regarding Defence's PFAS investigation and Management Program can be found at:

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