

Questions:

Hello, I'm seeking a comment from defence in relation to the updated guidelines on PFAS exposure, and updated information on Defence's involvement in testing in affected areas, including in the Northern Territory.

Will Defence be taking any new or different steps in response to contamination in light of these new guidelines?

Also, has Defence yet received notice of a class action by residents of Oakey?

Response:

Defence acknowledges the release of the health based guidance values (HBGVs) for per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

These values, developed by FSANZ at the request of the Department of Health, replace the interim advice developed by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) in June 2016.

Defence is assessing the implications of the FSANZ guidance values as a priority, and will work with its independent environmental consultants to revise and update relevant reports developed as part of the environmental investigations, including the Human Health Risk Assessments for Williamstown and Oakey.

Current and future Defence investigations and assessment, including those for RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Tindal and Robertson Barracks, will now adopt the FSANZ guidance values in place of the enHealth interim values.

Defence has not received any formal notification that a class action in Queensland has commenced.

PFAS Investigation and Management Overview

Defence is proactively managing a national program to investigate and manage the impacts resulting from the use of legacy fire fighting foams containing PFAS on its bases around Australia.

Defence is finalising a detailed environmental investigation to better understand the extent and levels of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of, the RAAF Base Williamstown and Army Aviation Centre Oakey.

Detailed environmental investigations at RAAF Base East Sale, RAAF Base Pearce, HMAS Albatross and RAAF Base Edinburgh commenced in 2016. Defence has or will soon commence detailed site investigations at an additional 12 properties: RAAF Base Townsville, RAAF Base Amberley, RAAF Base Richmond, Holsworthy Barracks, RAAF Base Wagga, HMAS Creswell/Jervis Bay Range Facility, Albury Wodonga Military Area (Bandiana), HMAS Cerberus, Garden Island/HMAS Stirling, RAAF Base Tindal, RAAF Base Darwin, and Robertson Barracks.

Response provided to journalist
5 April 2017

The environmental investigations at RAAF Base Tindal and RAAF Base Darwin commenced in March 2017 and the investigation at Robertson Barracks is expected to commence by mid 2017.

Defence continues to be committed to engaging with the local community throughout these investigations and will be holding two Community Walk-in Sessions on Wednesday 12 April in Katherine to provide local residents and business owners with an opportunity to discuss the detailed environmental investigation into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of, RAAF Base Tindal.

Date:
Wednesday 12 April 2017

Where:
Katherine Country Club
Pearce Street, Katherine

Session 1:
2:00 pm Doors Open
2:30 pm Presentation
4:00 pm Session Concludes

Session 2:
5:00 pm Doors Open
5:30 pm Presentation
7:00 pm Session Concludes

Further information on Defence's PFAS Investigation and Management Program can be found at:

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