

Response provided to journalist
21 February 2017

Questions:

As I said I have been following the investigation into PFOs and PFOA chemicals and potentially being cancer-causing at RAAF Edinburgh I was just wondering:

1. where this investigation is at?
2. Has there been an outcome?

I ask this as because South Australian Minister Ian Hunter (Sustainability, Environment and Conservation) today, banned the two chemicals because of their impact on the environment.

Response:

Defence acknowledges the announcement made by the South Australian Government on the future ban of the use of firefighting foams containing PFOS or PFOA or any other chemicals that degrade to PFOS or PFOA. This matter will now be considered by the Prime Minister & Cabinet Taskforce on PFAS.

Defence does not maintain stocks of the legacy aqueous film forming foams. From 2004, Defence transitioned to a new product called Ansulite for use on the Defence estate. The product currently used by Defence is a more environmentally safe product and does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients.

Defence commenced a Detailed Environmental Investigation at RAAF Base Edinburgh in November 2016. This comprehensive investigation will take approximately 12 months and is expected to be complete in the second half of 2017. The initial stage of the investigation, the preliminary site investigation, is anticipated to be completed by March. Defence remains committed to being open and transparent with local communities during the investigations and will provide findings and outcomes of the investigation once they are finalised.

The investigation is being carried out in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Contaminated Sites) Measure (NEPM) framework and will include:

- Reviewing the historical use, storage and management of legacy AFFF to identify sources;
- Sampling soil, surface water and groundwater on and off the base to determine the nature and extent of PFAS on, or in the vicinity of, the base;
- Targeted investigation of soil and groundwater in on-site areas where fire fighting foams were used;
- broad soil sampling across the wider base areas;
- investigation of sediment and surface water in drainage lines on-base and extending off-base;
- collection of surface water and sediment from key human health and ecological receptor locations; and
- A Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment, if required. These assessments will identify the nature and extent of potential contamination, evaluate any potential risks to the population and ecology, and inform future action to mitigate risks.

Defence continues to be committed to engaging with the local community throughout this investigation. Dates for the next community walk-in session are currently being finalised for RAAF Base Edinburgh and are anticipated for late March 2017. Advertising for these community engagement sessions will be available through local print media and published online at the PFAS website.