

Questions:

I believe the Australian standard for what's considered safe in regards to levels of PFOS and PFOA has changed since the report was produced into preliminary findings at Wagga's RAAF base. If so, does the report need updating? Or are the findings in it an accurate representation of the risk levels associated with the site?

Response:

Defence has been proactive in initiating an environmental program to investigate the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) including perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS), on and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Wagga

The Commonwealth Department of Health released final Health Based Guidance Values (HBGVs) for PFAS on 3 April 2017. The HBGVs were developed by FSANZ at the request of the Department of Health and replace the interim enHealth guidelines released in June 2016.

The preliminary sampling conducted at RAAF Base Wagga in June 2016 as part of the Preliminary Sampling Program was to understand if PFAS are present on, or in the vicinity of the property. The findings of the Preliminary Sampling Program confirmed the presence of PFAS and so a detailed environmental investigation will be conducted at RAAF Base Wagga.

The sampling to be conducted as part of the detailed environmental investigation will be far more comprehensive than that conducted for the Preliminary Sampling Program and as a result the Preliminary Sampling Report is not required to be updated. The detailed environmental investigation will identify the potential nature and extent of PFAS contamination on the base and in the surrounding area.

The investigation will include:

- reviewing the historical use, storage and management of aqueous film forming foams to identify potential sources of PFAS;
- sampling soil, sediment, surface water and groundwater on and off the base to identify PFAS exposure in the vicinity;
- identifying pathways and receptors for the potential migration of PFAS;
- community and stakeholder engagement, including a water-use survey; and
- if required, a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment which will evaluate potential risks to the human population and ecology, and inform future action to mitigate risks.

Defence will adopt the final Human Based Guidance Values in all its environmental investigations including at RAAF Base Wagga.

Response provided to journalist
2 June 2017

Defence has now engaged Jacobs as the independent environmental consultant to undertake the detailed environmental investigation on and around RAAF Base Wagga. Defence has further engaged ERM Australia Pty Ltd as the independent site auditor under NSW Contaminated Land Management Act.

Preparations for the detailed site investigation are now underway and it is expected that on-site testing will begin within the next eight weeks.

The detailed environmental investigation will be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework. Following commencement, the investigation will take approximately 12 months to complete.

Defence continues to be committed to engaging with the local community throughout this investigation. Further information about the environmental investigation at RAAF Base Wagga can be found at:

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

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