

Questions:

I have some questions about the use of PFAS at Pearce air base and the Senate estimates next week.

1. Opposition Cyber Security Defence assistant spokeswoman Gai Brodtmann has called for the Defence Minister Marise Payne to be more open about whether the department is still using firefighting foam containing PFAS chemicals. Please comment.
2. The department told Echo News - <http://echonewspaper.com.au/toxic-chemicals-still-used-pearce/> - that the firefighting foams used contained trace elements of PFOS and PFOA but did the department include this information in walk-in information sessions and the information sheets provided to Bullsbrook residents on Thursday, May 18?
3. The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee Hearing starts on Monday, May 29. Will an update on the PFAS investigation, including the one at Pearce air base, be part of the program? If not why not?

Response:

Defence has been, and continues to be open in providing information about the historical use of legacy aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) and the current firefighting foam utilised by Defence in emergency situations, Ansulite. It rejects the assertions made by Ms Brodtmann in her media release of 9 April 2017 suggesting that Defence has not been open about its use of Ansulite.

During Senate Budget Estimates hearings on 29 May 2017, Deputy Secretary Estate and Infrastructure, Steve Grzeskowiak, discussed Defence's use of Ansulite for firefighting purposes and noted it does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients and only trace elements of these chemicals. Mr Grzeskowiak has also given similar advice about Ansulite to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References and Legislation Committees at hearings on 3 December 2015, 22 December 2015, 7 April 2016 and 1 March 2017.

Defence has also provided media statements and responses to media enquiries about the use and composition of Ansulite. These can be found at:
<http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/PFOSPFOA/Media.asp>

During the Community Walk-in Session, Rear Admiral Clint Thomas discussed Defence's use of Ansulite.