

**Questions:**

Can the department please provide an update on where the investigations into PFOS/AFFF potential contamination at Defence bases are at? (Please include when detailed site investigations began at sites, when they are expected to be concluded and when a public report on each site is expected to be released).

Specifically, can the department also provide further detail on the status and findings of said investigations into the potential contamination at HMAS Albatross and HMAS Creswell (beyond that provided on the investigation website)?

Can the department confirm that it continued to use AFFFs containing PFOS and PFOA after the major manufacturer 3M pulled those products from the market in 2003?

When was the use of these products in fire fighting training discontinued on Defence bases in Australia (particularly on those now being investigated for potential contamination - itemised response if possible)?

Is it the case that Defence, until 3M pulled its AFFFs from the market in 2003, was unaware of any potential health effects on those using such chemicals in fire fighting training?

Can Defence please provide a copy of the ADF Inspector-General's report into the death of Chief Petty Officer Greg Lukes (served at HMAS Albatross)?

Some people I have spoken to have said exposure to a range of chemicals (particularly one known as PX-112 or Mobilarma 245) may have played a role in them later developing cancers or other illnesses such as emphysema.

Has the Defence Department investigated these claims? What actions have been taken in relation to such claims? Are ex-service personnel who can confirm they were exposed to such chemicals being offered additional help (financial through DVA or health assessments etc)?

Some I have spoken to have cited the exposure without any PPE from the 1980s and earlier, but also confirm much has since been done to improve PPE and chemicals handling in the military.

Can the department confirm what procedures are in place today that were not in place in the 1980s, to protect servicemen and women from such exposure?

**Response:**

Specialised aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) was used for nearly 50 years commencing in the mid 1970s across a range of major military bases, civilian aerodromes and industrial facilities around Australia for critical national defence and other purposes to rapidly extinguish liquid fuel fires. Chemicals in the older fire fighting foams - in particular, Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), PFOS and PFOA - were also used in a range of industrial, commercial and domestic products.

In the early 2000s, Defence became aware that PFOS was an emerging contaminant and commissioned an internal report in 2003 which provided an overview of knowledge available at the time regarding environmental issues associated with the use of AFFF products containing PFOS and PFOA. Whilst there was some understanding of potential environmental concerns at that time, less was understood in terms of potential health effects. Additionally, Defence is not an authority on health matters. In response to the 2003 internal report, Defence changed its practice and use of what are now legacy AFFF products and released a specification for the supply and testing of AFFF concentrates.

From 2004, Defence transitioned to a new product called Ansulite for use on the Defence estate. The product currently used by Defence has significantly reduced environmental impact and does not contain PFOS and PFOA as active ingredients.

Ansulite is used by Defence in emergency situations where human life is at risk, or in controlled environments to test equipment. Any Ansulite 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 follows the guidance of the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) released Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFC) Guidance Statements (was updated on 24 June 2016) that states there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. Because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, and enHealth recommends that human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution.

Individual Groups and Services within Defence developed their own Work Health Safety policies for personal protective equipment, or the management of chemicals and hazardous substances in the 1980s.

The Defence WHS branch was formed in 2003 to establish a central WHS authority within Defence and provide enterprise wide WHS policy and procedures.

Defence takes all reasonably practicable steps to safeguard the health and safety of its workforce, complying with Commonwealth legislation and industry standards.

Defence does not rely on personal protective equipment as the only safety mechanism when managing exposure to chemicals and substances, Defence also:

- conducts risk assessments prior to commencing work with any hazardous chemicals
- where possible, seeks a substitution or an engineering solution to reduce or eliminate exposure
- ensures our people are adequately trained to safely manage hazardous chemicals and substances
- only uses personal protective equipment that meets or exceeds Australian Standards; and
- regularly conducts compliance audits

Response provided to journalist  
22 March 2017

The IGADF Review into PO Lukes' death mentions 24 various chemicals used by aviation maintainers. It does not mention or link PO Lukes' death in any way to PFAS.

Defence does not intend to release the IGADF Review at this time.

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