

**Response provided to journalist
07 March 2017**

Question:

How much is the 12-month long investigation expected to cost? How soon will the first samples be collected? How extensive will the testing on the samples be? Will Defence also look for the presence of other chemicals in the water?

What other authorities will Defence liaise with during this process?

Response:

Defence has awarded the contract for the detailed environmental investigation at RAAF Base Townsville to WSP Parsons Brickerhoff as the lead consultant and to Coffey as the technical advisor. The costs of these contracts remain commercial in confidence and will be publicly released via AusTender within 42 calendar days from the time the contract is entered into.

The investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework as part of Defence's National PFAS Environmental Investigation and Management Program. The investigation will commence this month to determine the nature and extent of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of the base and will take approximately 12 months to complete.

Considerable effort will be undertaken to carry out this investigation including the collection and analysis of hundreds of samples including soil, water, sediment and flora and fauna as well, as completing modelling of the hydrology of the site.

Specifically, this investigation, 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 identify the potential for exposure to PFAS in the vicinity;
- Targeted investigation of soil and groundwater in on-site areas where firefighting 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.

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Defence's expert consultant will ensure that all samples taken are tested in laboratories accredited by the National Association of Test Authorities and that all investigation reports will be reviewed by a Third Party Reviewer.

Once information regarding the detailed environmental investigations are available, Defence will provide this information to the local and state authorities including the Townsville Council and the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet, and will engage with the local community.

Further information regarding the investigation at RAAF Base Townsville can be found at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Townsville/>