

**Questions:**

Community members in Wagga have been enquiring as to whether certain toxic chemicals might impact them moving forward.

I have been told PFAS investigations have delivered a report to the Department of Health in regard to their findings.

1. What are the most recent findings from the Investigations so far?
2. Residents around the base are being asked to give feedback on boar water usage. Why?
3. How will the toxic foam impact residents around the area moving forward? Is there possible health implications that people should be made aware of?

**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.

Preliminary sampling was conducted at RAAF Base Wagga in June 2016. A total of five samples were collected from off-base locations in the vicinity of RAAF Base Wagga—three groundwater and two surface water samples. No on-base samples were collected. PFAS was detected in one of the ground water samples and was detected in both of the surface water samples. The results of the Preliminary Sampling Program were published in September 2016. The report is available at: [www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/wagga/publications.asp](http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/wagga/publications.asp).

A detailed environmental investigation commenced at RAAF Base Wagga in May 2017. The investigation is being conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure framework (NEPM) and will take approximately 12 months to complete.

Defence has appointed Jacobs as the Lead Consultant and Environmental Resource Management as the Site Auditor for the investigation.

The first stage of the detailed environmental investigation is a preliminary investigation phase. This phase will involve the review of historical use of legacy fire-fighting foam at RAAF Base Wagga to identify on-base sources, conduct preliminary sampling, and develop an understanding of PFAS migration pathways and identify potential receptors.

As part of the preliminary investigation phase, Defence is conducting a water use survey. The information collected in the water use survey and the results from the preliminary sampling will assist the investigation to develop a systematic sampling

plan to undertake a detailed site investigation of RAAF Wagga and the surrounding area.

The water use survey can be accessed at:

[www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/wagga/publications.asp](http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/wagga/publications.asp)

In June 2016, the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth), which is a subcommittee of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), published guidance statements advising that there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. However, since these chemicals remain in humans and the environment for many years, it is recommended that as a precaution, human exposure to PFAS be minimised.

The preliminary investigations conducted by Defence have not identified a requirement to provide alternative drinking water sources to RAAF Wagga or the surrounding community. RAAF Base Wagga has been using mains water since 2009.

Specifically in respect of question four, Defence has no records that indicate base personnel were directed in 2013 not to drink water from the taps on the base.