

**Response Provided to Journalist  
16 August 2017**

**Questions:**

What has been learnt so far in the Edinburgh RAAF base investigation?

How many sites have been tested?

How many of these tested positive?

What levels were found?

In March, Defence wanted to hear from anyone living near the base who uses, or historically used, bore water to top up their rainwater tanks - How many people use or historically used bore water to top up their rainwater tanks in the area?

What has been done so far in the investigation?

What are the next steps?

**Response to all:**

In November 2016, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation into the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), on and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Edinburgh. The investigation is being conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework and is expected to be completed in mid-2018.

As part of the first stage of the investigation, the Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI), previous studies and environmental investigations have been reviewed by the expert consultant to build up a picture of historical use, storage, disposal and management of Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF) and potential impacts of PFAS. The information gathered within the PSI was used to inform the sampling program for the second stage of the investigation, the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI).

Commencing in April 2017, the DSI includes the sampling of soil, groundwater, surface water and sediment on and off RAAF Base Edinburgh. It is anticipated that approximately 800 samples will be taken as part of the DSI. Results to date range from 'positive' at identified source areas on RAAF Base Edinburgh, down to nil detects at locations off base. A positive result is not necessarily indicative of any risk to the public as it depends on the location of the result and whether there is a pathway for people to be exposed.

A primary pathway for exposure is through the consumption of contaminated groundwater. Through the investigation Defence has confirmed that the majority of

properties in the vicinity of the Base are connected to town water and currently understand that there are no residents in this area drinking groundwater.

All sampling results will be published in the DSI, which is expected to be completed in early 2018. Findings from the DSI will inform the need for a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA). If required, the HHERA will evaluate potential risks of elevated PFAS concentrations to the human population and ecology, and outline strategies to mitigate risks. Defence anticipates a recommendation regarding whether a HHERA is required will be provided in late 2017.

In March 2017 at the community walk-in session and more recently via targeted letter box drop, Defence requested community support to complete a voluntary Water Use Survey, to help gather data about water use in the vicinity of the base. In addition, Defence has met with a number of residents to assist in the completion of the survey. The survey is ongoing and is available online at the PFAS Investigation website. The information gathered from the survey helps identify the water sources and uses within the area to assist with the investigation. The specific information provided in the surveys is confidential, but data gathered will be used to inform the investigation and will be published in the DSI.

The next community consultation event is planned for late October or early November 2017 and will update the community on the initial results of the DSI and the next stages of the investigation.

Further information on the RAAF Base Edinburgh PFAS investigation can be found at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/Edinburgh/>