

Questions:

I would like to know the results for agricultural testing for PFAS chemicals in the Katherine region.

And if the Department will extend (or are extending / have extended) the tests to commercial farms and when you will the results. Has the Department asked any commercial properties for permission to test their produce, if so how many, which ones, if they granted permission and what their responses have been.

Also, Defence is providing Katherine with a water filtering system to help reduce the PFAS chemicals in Katherine's water supply. Can you please confirm how much water the facility will be able to filter a day?

Oh also, I just saw that Defence is also installing rain water tanks on some properties...has that started and how many properties will be getting them?

Response:

Defence has conducted residential sampling within the Katherine area including a limited number of produce samples. These tests have been conducted at the request of the residents, and as such, Defence does not have the residents permission to publish these results. Defence will conduct further sampling of produce to inform the detailed environmental investigation that commenced in March 2017 to investigate the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on and around the Base. These results will be made public within the investigation reports.

Defence has been working closely with the Northern Territory Government (including the Department of Primary Industries), and has not yet identified any commercial farms in the RAAF Base Tindal Investigation Area. All known commercial farms in the Katherine area are in locations outside the area of interest. The Department of Health's Health Based Guidance Values for PFAS do not include any restrictions on PFAS levels in commercial produce.

Defence has engaged international environmental company Emerging Compounds Treatment Technologies to provide a water treatment plant to reduce the amount of PFAS in the Katherine town water supply. It is intended the water treatment plant will filter PFAS from the bore water before it enters the blending process in the current water treatment plant. The plant is capable of treating approximately 1 million litres of water (1 megalitre) per day.

It is important to note, that this is being done as a precaution and, as advised by NT Health and NT Power and Water Corporation, the town water supply remains safe to drink.

In April 2017, Defence announced it will fund rainwater tanks for eligible residents in the Katherine region. Currently, there have been approximately 65 property owners identified as eligible to receive rainwater tanks in the Katherine area. These property owners have been advised and discussions have commenced about their

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preferences and needs regarding the installation of the water tanks. However, the choice to receive a rainwater tank remains at the discretion of the property owner.

Defence has recently conducted a tender process to identify suitable companies to supply, install and connect the rainwater tanks. Defence expects to be in contract with the preferred tenderers by the end of August and the installation of rainwater tanks to be completed before the wet season commences.

Further information on the provision of rainwater tanks is available at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/docs/Tindal/factsheets/170711FactsheetRainwaterTankFinancialSupport.pdf>

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