

**Response provided to journalist
9 August 2017**

Questions:

1. What stage in the investigation at and what work is currently being conducted on or off the site of RAAF Base Townsville?
2. How many residents and or business completed the water use survey?
3. Why are the results of the survey important to the investigation?
4. What does Defence think about the adequacy of the sample size in terms of helping the investigation?
5. When will the survey results be released and will it be made public?
6. Where exactly offsite have water and soil samples been taken from?
7. Why is the investigation area so large, much larger than the base itself?
8. How many people has Defence provided bottled water to as a result of the investigation?
9. What will stage 3 of the investigation involve?
10. When is the report expected to be completed and then released publicly?

Response to all:

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), perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), on and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Townsville.

In March 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation at RAAF Base Townsville, in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework. The investigation will take approximately 12 months to complete and consists of a Preliminary Site Investigation, a Detailed Site Investigation and if required, a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA).

The Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI), which has been completed, included establishing an understanding of site characteristics to identify possible pathways of PFAS to receptors on and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Townsville. The PSI findings are being used to develop the sampling plan for the second stage of the investigation, the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI).

The DSI is in progress and involves the sampling of soil, sediment, surface water, groundwater, plant and animals on and near RAAF Base Townsville to further assess the nature and extent of PFAS contamination in the Investigation Area. The Investigation Area defines the current extent of the DSI, focusing on potential exposure of people and the ecology. This is expected to contract in areas where delineation is achieved (a pathway between source and receptor is not found), while potentially also expanding in areas where a pathway is found. Exact locations of samples will be contained in the DSI Report, except for where there are privacy obligations pertaining to sampling locations.

Findings from the DSI will inform the need for a HHERA. If required, the Risk Assessments will evaluate potential risks of elevated PFAS concentrations to the

**Response provided to journalist
9 August 2017**

human population and ecology, and outline strategies to mitigate risks. Defence anticipates the Risk Assessments if required will be provided in early 2018.

On 14 June 2017, Defence conducted a community-walk in session to request community support to complete a voluntary Water Use Survey. A key exposure pathway for ingestion of PFAS is through consuming PFAS contaminated bore water. The purpose of the Water Use Survey is to provide an understanding of how water is used by the local community and specifically to provide information as to whether bore water is being consumed by the community. Responses from the Water Use Survey have indicated that the residents located in close proximity to RAAF Base Townsville do not use bore water for drinking. Defence has not received any requests to provide alternative drinking water.

Defence is committed to regularly updating the community throughout the investigation. As well as community information sessions, updates are provided through the project website, direct mail and information sheets as new information becomes available.

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