

Questions:

- 1) What is the progress of the Golder Associates environmental investigation - have samples been taken or community engagement enacted yet?
- 2) Has defence provided any residents with alternative water supplies since the GHD report was presented in September 2016?
- 3) This GHD report outlined exceeded levels of PFOS (0.5) in one site, and exceedance of lead levels in three sites with one site four times above the lead limit.

What actions have been taken since these levels were identified?

- 4) What messages does Defence have for community residents who may be concerned about the investigation or details reported in ABC's Four Corners program?

Response:

In 2016 Defence engaged GHD to conduct a Preliminary Sampling Program (PSP) to determine if per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) were present at 12 Defence sites including the Bandiana Military Area (Bandiana). The PSP sampling focused on measuring PFAS however measurements of other contaminants, including lead, were also recorded. All PSP sampling results are available in the PSP report on the Bandiana PFAS website:
<http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Bandiana/publications.asp>

The PSP indicated that a detailed environmental investigation was required into the nature and extent of PFAS on and near Bandiana. Defence launched this detailed environmental investigation in July 2017.

Defence is currently conducting the second stage of the detailed environmental investigation process, a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI), at Bandiana. The DSI involves the sampling of soil, sediment, surface water, groundwater, on and near Bandiana to further assess the nature and extent of PFAS contamination in the Investigation Area.

The community's health and safety is Defence's primary concern. Currently, the Australian Government is conducting voluntary blood testing programs in the Williamstown, Oakey and Katherine communities. The Voluntary Blood Testing Program runs concurrently with an epidemiological study to improve the understanding of the potential health effects relating to PFAS exposure.

The blood testing programs are running in Williamstown, Katherine and Oakey because the extent of contamination and exposure pathways at these sites is well understood. Once further investigations of other areas have been completed, and the extent of the contamination and exposure pathways are better understood, the Australian Government will be in a position to consider whether it would be appropriate to expand the voluntary blood testing program, epidemiological study and additional mental health and support services to these investigation areas.

In reference to the Shine Lawyers statement, Defence cannot provide health advice. This is the role of respective Australian Government, State/Territory and local health authorities and practitioners.

The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has released guidance statements relating to human health. According to enHealth, there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. However, because these substances persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure is minimised as a precaution.

Defence has not identified any residents within the Investigation Area that require alternative water supplies. North East Water is regularly testing the Wodonga water supply and has not detected PFAS to date.

Defence is committed to being open and transparent about the progress and findings of the investigation at Bandiana. Defence has held two community walk-in sessions in Bandiana to provide the community with preliminary findings and an opportunity to speak with representatives from Defence, the contracted investigation team and other relevant Government Agencies. Updates are also provided through the [Bandiana investigation website](#), factsheets, emails and letters.

In keeping with this commitment to openness and transparency Defence invited the ABC Australia's Four Corners program to visit RAAF Base Williamtown on the fourth of October. Defence hosted the visit and participated in an hour long interview with Four Corners, addressing every question regarding PFAS contamination.

A statement regarding the Four Corners PFAS Program and a copy of the referenced 1987 report are available on the home page of the Defence PFAS Investigation and Management Program website:
<http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/>