

**Response provided to journalist  
11 December 2017**

**Question**

Regarding the investigations at RAAF Base Townsville and Lavarack Barracks:

1. What update was provided to community and can we get a copy of any documents/powerpoints etc. they were used as part of any presentation made?
2. How many people attended each session?
3. What were some of the questions/concerns raised by residents?
4. How many people have registered to participate in the recreational fishing survey and what is the purpose of this survey?
5. Why do you need participation in the recreational fishing survey?
6. How many people have completed the water use survey and what is the purpose of this survey?
7. Why do you need participation in the water use survey?
8. What work will take place regarding RAAF Base Townsville and Lavarack Barracks PFAS Investigation and Management Program for the remainder of this year?
9. What work will be a priority regarding RAAF Base Townsville and Lavarack Barracks PFAS Investigation and Management Program when it recommences next year?

**Response**

Defence held community walk-in sessions on 29 and 30 November 2017 to provide updates to the Townsville community on the per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) investigations being conducted on, and in the vicinity of, RAAF Base Townsville and Lavarack Barracks. Over the two days, 24 community members attended the sessions where they were able to ask questions one-on-one with representatives from Defence, the Investigation Project Team and relevant State and Local Government authorities. Questions from the community focused on the current activities of the investigations, progress of other investigations into PFAS being conducted by Defence and PFAS impacts on drinking water and food.

There were no presentations at these sessions. There were updated factsheets available for community members to read and take home that provided updates on the investigations and outlined the next steps. All finalised investigation publications, including these factsheets, can be downloaded from the respective investigation websites:

<http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/lavarack/>

<http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/townsville/>

To assist with the investigations, Defence has requested community support to complete voluntary surveys to better understand how the community interacts with the environment and better determine if additional sampling is required to be carried out for the investigations.

Water Use Surveys to collect information about water supply and use on properties around the Bases are being conducted for both investigations and were available at the community walk-in sessions. To date, 146 people have completed the RAAF

Base Townsville Water Use Survey and 59 people have completed the Lavarack Barracks Water Use Survey.

As part of the Townsville investigation, a Recreational Fishing Survey will also be conducted to further inform PFAS environmental investigation and assessment. It will collect information about fishing habits of residents in the Townsville area, specifically what they catch and eat. Defence expects to open the Recreational Fishing Survey in February 2018. To date, there have been four registrations for the recreational fishing survey.

### **RAAF Base Townsville Update**

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

Based on the initial findings of the DSI, Defence has commenced a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA) to evaluate potential risks to the human population and ecology, and inform actions to mitigate risks.

Sampling and analysis for the DSI and HHERA has commenced and will continue through to early 2018. Defence expects to publish the DSI and HHERA reports in mid 2018.

### **Lavarack Barracks Update**

Defence is currently conducting the first stage of the detailed environmental investigation, a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI), at Lavarack Barracks. The PSI involves the historical review of legacy firefighting use and storage to identify where and when legacy firefighting foam was used (sources), how PFAS moves in the environment (migration pathways) and people, animals and the environment that may be exposed to PFAS (receptors).

The findings of the PSI will be used to develop a conceptual site model, to guide understanding of sources of PFAS and their potential pathways to people, animals and the environment and to prioritise works for stage two of the investigation, the DSI. The PSI is expected to conclude in early 2018. Sampling and analysis for the DSI is expected to commence in early 2018 and continue through the year.