

Questions:

1. Did all the sediment, soil, surface water, groundwater and biota samples taken during the second sampling stage contain some PFAS? (I am not referring to them containing PFAS exceeding the health based guidance values developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand but to containing any PFAS at all?)
2. Which form of PFAS – PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS – was most common in the samples?
3. The human health and ecological risk assessment brochure available at the update says the PFAS found in surface water in the base drainage channels, Ellen Brook and Ki-it Monger Brook exceeded the relevant HBGVs. Was this PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS?
4. Will Defence be testing for PFAS in the Swan River? If yes when and if not will any other department such as the Department of Water and Environment Regulation be testing for PFAS in the Swan River?
5. Where is the landfill site identified during this second stage of sampling? Is it north of the five main sources of PFAS contamination on the base?

Given that Pearce firefighters who worked with these chemicals every day at work are most likely to potentially be exposed to any health effects is their health going to be monitored including blood tests? (The **New Jersey Drinking Water Quality Institute 21 Health Effects Subcommittee 22 November 15, 2017 - HEALTH-BASED MAXIMUM CONTAMINANT LEVEL 9 SUPPORT DOCUMENT: 10 PERFLUOROOCTANE SULFONATE (PFOS) 11 (CAS #: 1763-23-1; Chemical Formula: C₈H₁₇O₃S)** said Exposures to industrially-exposed workers or others with occupational exposure are much higher than in the general population and that serum PFOS concentrations of greater than 10,000 ng/ml (10 ppm) have been reported in industrially exposed workers, although levels in most workers were lower.)

Response to all:

On 28 November, Defence held a community walk-in session to update the Bullsbrook community on the progress of the detailed environmental investigation into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on and near RAAF Base Pearce.

The preliminary DSI findings identified that of the 49 off-base properties where groundwater was sampled, PFAS was detected at a level at seven. PFAS levels were above the drinking water health based guidelines at four of these properties. The preliminary findings also identified PFAS at a landfill site, located north of the five main PFAS source areas on Commonwealth Land.

Defence is currently producing a comprehensive DSI report. This report will contain detailed sampling results, including the levels of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) in all samples. The DSI report is expected to be finalised by mid 2018. The report will be sent to relevant Government authorities and published on the RAAF Base Pearce PFAS Investigation website.

The Investigation Area was set following an analysis of the topography, hydrology and hydrogeology of the region and verified by sampling results. The Swan River is not within the Defence Investigation Area. The Defence Investigation Area encompasses the area that PFAS may have migrated to from the Defence sources on Base. Defence has no plans to sample the Swan River and is unaware of other agencies' plans to sample the river.

Once further investigations at other sites 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 to residents and workers who live or work in, or have lived or worked in the RAAF Base Pearce Investigation Area.

The following services are available to current and former Defence members in relation to exposure to PFAS:

ADF Historical Occupational Exposure Record

For current ADF members, Defence has developed the ADF Historical Occupational Exposure Record to facilitate reporting of past exposures to any potential occupational hazard. This allows ADF members to record any historical exposures that have not already been recorded in their medical record.

Defence Asbestos and Hazardous Chemicals Exposure Scheme (DAHCES)

The Defence Asbestos and Hazardous Chemicals Exposure Scheme (DAHCES) is open to current and former employees of the Department of Defence and former ADF personnel (including Cadets), who suspect that they have been exposed to asbestos or a chemical (including PFAS) as a result of their employment with Defence.

Persons wishing to participate in the DAHCES should call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 3623) to register their details and access further information.