

**Questions:**

I note on this page the list of sites currently under investigation  
<http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/PFOSPFOA/DefenceSites.asp>

Will detailed investigations be taken at NT bases?

I note preliminary investigations are underway at NT bases. When will the results of the investigations be finalised and released? Are alternative drinking water sources being provided to residents outside of Katherine, elsewhere in the NT?

Whether Defence will provide voluntary blood tests to residents in the NT? I note in other states the federal health department has offered this but as Health has said it won't offer this at this stage in the NT, will Defence offer it?

Additionally, I note this document ([http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Darwin/\\_master/docs/170322\\_Presentation-Darwin&Robertson\\_CommunityWalkInSession.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Darwin/_master/docs/170322_Presentation-Darwin&Robertson_CommunityWalkInSession.pdf)) says **detailed** environmental investigations will begin at Robertson Barracks sometime in the first half of 2017. Has this began? Is it still expected to take 12 months? (I note **preliminary** sampling has already taken place).

The document states investigations at RAAF Base Darwin have already commenced. Can you please tell me when they are expected to conclude?

**Response:**

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) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), on and around Defence sites, including at RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Tindal and Robertson Barracks in the Northern Territory.

Defence commenced detailed environmental investigations at RAAF Base Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal in March 2017. An independent lead consultant has now been engaged to conduct a detailed environmental investigation at Robertson Barracks and the preparation works have now commenced.

All detailed environmental investigations will take approximately 12 months to complete and will be conducted in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure framework (NEPM).

The initial stage of the detailed environmental investigation, the Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI), commenced in March 2017 at RAAF Base Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal.

Key outcomes of the PSI include:

- understanding site characteristics

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- identifying possible PFAS sources based on historical AFFF storage, use and disposal
- understanding possible migration pathways to on-base and off-base receptors.

The results of the PSI will inform development of the sampling plan for the second stage of the detailed environmental investigation, the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI). Defence continues to be committed to engaging with the local communities throughout the investigations and will be conducting Community Walk-in Sessions at RAAF Base Darwin on 27 June and RAAF Base Tindal on 29 June to provide an update on the investigations including the results of the initial stage of the investigation. The details for the sessions can be found at:

- <http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Darwin/CommunityConsultation.asp>
- <http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Tindal/CommunityConsultation.asp>

The Australian Government, led by the Department of Health, has established a Voluntary Blood Testing Program for people that work or live, or have worked or lived, within the investigation areas at Williamstown and Oakey. This includes people currently living elsewhere who previously lived or worked at these places.

The Voluntary Blood Testing Program is being conducted in conjunction with an epidemiological study and these activities are focused on the Oakey and Williamstown communities because the extent of contamination and the exposure pathways are well understood. The extent of contamination at other sites, including those in the Northern Territory, is still being determined. These activities at Williamstown and Oakey will contribute to our understanding of the potential health risks associated with PFAS and inform decisions on the potential for similar activities at other sites in the future.

Any further questions regarding the Voluntary Blood Testing Program should be directed to the Department of Health.

When assessing and managing any risks to human health posed by PFOS and PFOA, Defence has regard to the guidance statements issued by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth). The enHealth guidance statements advise that there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. However, because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution.

Defence has adopted a precautionary approach and is providing alternative sources of drinking water to eligible residents located in close proximity to affected bases when a town water connection is not available, and there is a reliance on the use of a bore for drinking water. As of 13 June 2017, Defence is providing alternative drinking water to 43 properties in the Katherine region and no properties in the vicinity of RAAF Base Darwin and Robertson Barracks.