

Questions:

I'm just getting in touch to find out the latest on the PFAS Investigation at HMAS Albatross & Creswell.

Where is the investigation up to? I understand it was due to be completed in July?

Is there any indication as to how widespread the contamination is?

Should we be warning people about possible impacts to health?

Are you any closer to understanding the long-term impact of PFAS & PFOA?

Is the exposure anywhere near what's going on in Catherine and Williamstown?

When will you start looking into compensation?

Is there anything else you can add that can shed light on this issue.

Response:

Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation on and in the surrounding area of HMAS Albatross in May 2016.

Currently, Defence is in the process of conducting a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) and a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA) as part of the environmental investigation at HMAS Albatross. The DSI aims to define the nature and extent of PFAS contamination and will identify PFAS source areas on-base and the pathways of PFAS migration off-base. The HHERA will provide a better understanding of risks posed by PFAS to people and the environment.

Since April 2017, further sampling of groundwater off-base and plants and animals has been conducted to inform both the DSI and HHERA for HMAS Albatross which are both anticipated to be completed and published in late 2017.

In March 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation on and in the surrounding area of Jervis Bay Range Facility (JBRF). Due to its close proximity to JBRF, HMAS Creswell falls within the investigation area and will be considered in the JBRF investigation.

A DSI and a HHERA are currently underway as part of the environmental investigation at JBRF. The detailed environmental investigation at JBRF is expected to be completed in mid-2018.

Once investigation findings are finalised for JBRF and HMAS Albatross, Defence will provide the results to the local communities. The findings of the investigations will be used to inform mitigation strategies to minimise long-term PFAS exposure to the local community and environment.

The nature and extent of the PFAS presence at each site is different due to the differing nature of the topography, hydrology and hydrogeology.

The investigations at the areas surrounding HMAS Albatross and JBRF have identified that there are no residents using groundwater for domestic purposes. As a result, there are no properties in the JBRF and HMAS Albatross areas were receiving alternative drinking water.

Defence understands community concerns in relation to PFAS detections and is committed to working with the relevant authorities to ensure the affected communities are provided with the most up-to-date information relating to PFAS and the investigations.

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Defence expects to conduct the next Community Walk-in Sessions in Albatross in late 2017 to present the findings of the DSI and HHERA. Defence also expects to hold Community Walk-in Sessions in Jervis Bay in late 2017 to discuss current activities, scheduling and potential sampling around the Wreck Bay and Jervis Bay village and communities.

Defence is not an expert on matters relating to population health and relies on the expertise of the relevant health authorities. When assessing and managing any potential risks to human health posed by PFAS Defence refers to the guidance issued by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth). The enHealth guidance statements advise there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFAS causes adverse human health effects. However, because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution. Any further questions regarding PFAS impacts on human health should be directed to the Department of Health.

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