

Response provided to journalist
20 October 2017

Question

Regarding HMAS Cerberus

Could you tell the progress of the PFAS report please?
when will it be released?

Has any contamination been found?

What measures are being taken to clean up any contamination?

Response

In 2016, Defence completed a Preliminary Sampling Program to investigate the presence of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at 12 Defence sites including HMAS Cerberus. Based on the outcome of the Preliminary Sampling Program it was determined that the base required a detailed environmental investigation. The results of this program are available online at <http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/publications/reports.asp>

In May 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation into the nature and extent of PFAS, on and in the vicinity of HMAS Cerberus. The investigation is being conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (NEPM) framework and is expected to be complete in mid-2018.

The first stage of the detailed environmental investigation has now been completed and involved a review of the historic use of legacy firefighting foams at the base to identify PFAS sources, migration pathways and potential receptors.

The second stage of the detailed environmental investigation commenced in September 2017. This stage will involve sampling and analysis of soil, surface water, sediment, groundwater and land vegetation on-base and in the surrounding region. Soil and groundwater samples have already been taken and bores are currently being prepared for sampling. Once the sampling is complete and results are analysed a detailed report will be prepared and shared with relevant government and regulatory bodies as well as the community. The report is expected to be complete in mid 2018.

Depending on the sampling results, a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment may be required. This assessment will evaluate potential risks to the human population and ecology, and inform actions to mitigate risks.

Defence is investigating and trialing a range of PFAS management initiatives. These include various water treatment technologies, drain maintenance activities, soil solidification trials and soil stabilisation trials. Defence is also monitoring research around the world to ensure that it is aware of new advances in technology and methodology. Information on Defence's management activities is available at <http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/managementactivities.asp>.

The nature and extent of the PFAS presence at each site varies due to differences in topography, hydrology and hydrogeology. For this reason, each site requires a different management response. Once the Detailed Environmental Investigation at HMAS Cerberus is complete Defence will have the information required to determine the best method for management of PFAS contamination on and around HMAS Cerberus.

Defence is committed to regularly updating the community throughout the investigation. As well as community information sessions, updates are provided through direct mail, information sheets the project website: <http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Cerberus/>