

Questions

1. What percentage of residents in the Forest Hill area are using bore water?
2. Defence has previously said surface level water is contaminated, what effect is that going to have on the Cattle Farms, Fish Hatcheries and General businesses in the area surrounding RAAF Base Wagga?
3. If any businesses are ruined as a result of the contamination from PFAS do you anticipate legal action from anyone in the community?
4. Are there any residents that you are concerned about who have been drinking contaminated water?
5. As you identify where the water run-off is goes, do you anticipate any impacts on the Murrumbidgee River? Water run off would go into that water source that the wider Wagga Community draws from.

Response to all

In September 2017, Defence commenced the second stage of the environmental investigation into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI). The DSI will involve on-base and off-base sampling, including the sampling of properties and environmental features surrounding RAAF Base Wagga such as the Murrumbidgee river.

The DSI is expected to continue until early 2018 with the findings being used to identify potential risks to people and the environment from the presence of PFAS. The understanding of these potential risks will assist in developing mitigation strategies to minimise exposure and impacts upon the community and environment.

Throughout the investigation, Defence is working closely with local and state agencies including the Wagga City Council, NSW Department of Health, NSW Environment Protection Authority and the NSW Department of Industry.

Once finalised, all findings from the detailed environmental investigations will be reported to the relevant government agencies, regulatory bodies and the local community.

To assist with the investigation, Defence has also requested community support to complete a voluntary Water Use Survey. A key exposure pathway for ingestion of PFAS is through consuming PFAS contaminated bore water. The purpose of the Survey is to provide an understanding of how water is used by the local community and specifically to provide information as to whether bore water is being consumed by the community.

Responses from the Water Use Survey have indicated that the residents located in the Forest Hill area do not use bore water for drinking. As at 6 October 2017, Defence has not received any requests to provide alternative drinking water.

If an individual or business considers that they have suffered a loss or injury as a consequence of Defence activities, it is open to that individual or business to make a claim. Claims for compensation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Further information on claims is outlined at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/FinancialClaims.asp>