

Questions:

Wagga City Councillor Dan Hayes has called on Defence to release updated assessments of P-fas contamination at Forest Hill based on new minimum guidelines for human health. Why has Defence not updated the information from the initial assessment report to include the new safe levels?

Response:

In 2016, Defence completed a Preliminary Sampling Program (PSP) to investigate the presence of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at 12 Defence sites, including RAAF Base Wagga. The report of this program can be found at: <http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/publications/reports.asp>

The PSP findings were assessed against the interim Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) guidelines released in June 2016. The report parameters were based on the reporting standards at the date of preparation. The report now stands as a historical record noting the relevant guidance at the time of publication.

On 3 April 2017, the Commonwealth Department of Health released final Health Based Guidance Values (HBGVs) for PFAS. These HBGVs were developed by FSANZ at the request of Department of Health and replaced the interim enHealth guidelines.

All Defence PFAS investigations and risk assessments commencing or underway from 3 April 2017 have adopted the FSANZ guidance values in place of the enHealth interim values. This includes the detailed environmental investigation that commenced in May 2017 to identify the nature and extent of PFAS on and in the surrounding area of RAAF Base Wagga.

Defence is committed to being open and transparent with the local community throughout the PFAS investigation. Once finalised, findings from the detailed environmental investigation will be reported to the relevant government agencies, regulatory bodies and the local community.