

**Question:**

I am requesting a statement on behalf of Defence regarding [the reports](#) that residents near the Williamstown RAAF base should have been warned about the risk of contamination three years earlier than they were.

Also that a potential clean-up cost would cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Response:**

Defence continues to deepen its understanding of PFAS, and applies this knowledge to its environmental investigation program. In 2012, there was not the knowledge about PFAS chemicals that we have today. As a result, Defence followed the standard nationally accredited processes in conducting investigations of contamination. Defence has adjusted its approach to investigating PFAS, and engaging with local communities at Defence sites where PFAS could be present, based on what we have learned over the past five years.

Defence is committed to being open and transparent with local communities and as a result conducts face to face community engagement activities at the commencement of each investigation, and at key milestones of progress. Defence has also established dedicated community telephone lines for each site and a website for the National Investigation and Management Program.

Defence is currently conducting 23 detailed environmental investigations on and in the areas surrounding Defence sites across Australia. The investigations aim to identify the nature and extent of PFAS in the environment from the use of legacy fire-fighting foam and any potential risks to people or the environment. The findings of these investigations will inform mitigation advice to minimise the local communities' PFAS exposure if risks are identified. The investigations are at varying stages and at this point in time an exact cost of any remediation and other management activities is not able to be confirmed.