

Question:

I have some questions regarding the contamination from Williamtown RAAF base. I would like to know the latest on testing of affected areas and if the contaminants are still actively leaking from the base.

Response:

Defence is working continuously towards the effective monitoring and management of PFAS contamination at Williamtown and continues to engage with industry experts both nationally and internationally to identify the best PFAS management options.

PFAS migration off RAAF Base Williamtown has occurred over time due to a variety of factors. The Williamtown region is situated on a flood plain, allowing PFAS migration to occur more easily through surface water dispersion.

PFAS treatment technologies are in their infancy and cannot currently operate on a large enough scale to treat all of RAAF Base Williamtown however Defence has introduced measures to reduce the amount of PFAS contaminated water leaving the Base. These include:

- the Lake Cochran water treatment plant;
- the Moor's Drain water treatment plant; and
- drain maintenance activities.

Defence is also planning future works to reduce water flows from the base. In the RAAF Base Williamtown upgrade works, the base stormwater systems are designed and built in accordance with the Port Stephens Council requirements not to increase the peak runoff from the base.

In addition, in consultation with the Port Stephens Council, Defence has commissioned a regional flood alleviation study to analyse the stormwater system downstream of the Base. The study includes Dawson's Drain, Fullerton Cove, Moor's Drain and Tilligerry Creek catchments. This work will commence in September 2017 and will use an expert team to develop a clear understanding of the capacity and operation of the drainage network and propose practical measures to improve the system.

Defence has been proactive in initiating an environmental program to understand and manage the impacts of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, RAAF Base Williamtown and other bases around Australia.

Following the completion of assessments conducted in 2016 as part of the environmental investigation, it was identified that data gaps remained in some

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portions of the Investigation Area. As a result further works are underway to update and refine the 2016 reports.

Defence is currently conducting additional works as part of the detailed environmental investigation, which includes:

- the uptake of PFAS in fruit and vegetables
- the uptake of PFAS in chicken eggs
- seafood sampling and analysis
- additional surface water and groundwater data collection
- additional sediment data collection and analysis.

This phase of the investigation will be completed and the reports published by the end of November 2017.

Defence is undertaking a range of management strategies to reduce exposure to PFAS, including the installation of water treatment plants to treat water containing PFAS, soil stabilisation trials and drain maintenance activities.

Defence is committed to regularly updating the Williamstown community throughout the investigation.