

**Response provided to journalist  
14 August 2018**

**Questions:**

Can I ask about the timing of this (Salt Ash) investigation? Why now and not earlier given what's been happening at Williamstown?

**Response:**

Defence is undertaking the largest program of environmental investigations ever undertaken in Australia with 27 investigations commencing over the past three years. Noting the limited industry capacity to undertake these significant, concurrent investigations, Defence takes a risk-based approach to prioritising the order of these investigations based on the known historical use of legacy firefighting foam products across its estate.

In June 2017, Defence engaged AECOM to undertake sampling for PFAS at the Salt Ash Weapons Range which identified PFHxS+PFOS in two on-base samples below the FSANZ health-based guidance value for recreational use. Defence was subsequently advised by the Hunter Water Corporation in July 2017 that it had identified low-level PFHxS+PFOS readings in extraction bores (significantly below the FSANZ health-based guidance values for drinking water) near the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range. These results were presented to the Williamstown Community Reference Group in August 2017.

As a result of these detections, Defence commenced the procurement process and has now engaged an environmental consultant to conduct a Preliminary Site Investigation to understand the source, nature and extent of PFAS at and around the Range to determine if a more detailed investigation is required.

Defence is committed to being open and transparent with the Salt Ash community throughout this investigation.