

**Questions:**

I'm seeking a response from Defence to the PFAS contamination of the Forest Hill Sewerage Treatment Facility in Wagga Wagga. When did Defence learning about the contamination? How is the contamination on base being managed? How much concern is there that the PFAS is in heavy concentrations on the base given its presence in the effluent plant?

Wagga City Council has told us it is aware of complaints about stormwater from Kapooka. Has Defence received similar complaints and how is Defence handling the problem or proposing to handle it?

**Response:**

In May 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation to better understand the nature and extent of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on and around RAAF Base Wagga. A detailed report containing all investigation findings was published in June 2018, and is available for download from the Defence website:

<http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Wagga/>

As part of the detailed environmental investigation, samples were taken at RAAF Base Wagga and in the surrounding area, including the Forest Hill Sewerage Treatment Facility. This investigation detected PFAS in the treatment facility's effluent ponds. As a result, Defence has committed to undertake additional sampling to better understand the nature and extent of these PFAS concentrations.

The next step of the detailed environmental investigation is to conduct a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA) report. The report will consider the results of all sampling undertaken to assess a range of risks in the vicinity of RAAF Wagga, including in association with the Forest Hill Sewerage Treatment Facility. The risk assessment report is expected to be finalised and presented to the community in the fourth quarter of 2018.

Defence met with Council on Monday 6 August to discuss this matter, and will update Council and local community as additional information becomes available. Defence is committed to reducing the exposure pathways from PFAS to affected communities through management activities based on the findings of the environmental investigations. Defence committed to cooperating with the Council to understand the nature and extent of any PFAS in the sewage system that might have originated from the Base. Where required, Defence will consider any potential management decisions which are technically-sound and that take the findings of the HHERA report into consideration. Questions regarding the Council's actions should be directed to the council.

Response provided to journalist  
09 August 2018

In addition to the environmental investigation at RAAF Wagga, Defence commenced a Detailed Site Investigation on and around Blamey Barracks (Kapooka) in August 2018. The objective of the investigation is to identify the nature and extent of PFAS from Defence use in the area and identify any exposure pathways to people, plants and animals. As part of this investigation process, Defence has issued a water use survey to residents in the vicinity of Kapooka. Defence encourages the local community to complete and return this survey, to improve our understanding of local hydrology and water use. The Detailed Site Investigation Report is expected to be finalised and presented to the community in the second quarter of 2019.

In early 2017 the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) for Kapooka received a complaint from a resident on the impact of stormwater and effluent from Kapooka to his property. The SADFO met with the resident immediately following this complaint at the property. Upon inspection, the stormwater impact was determined not to be coming from the base and the resident was encouraged to contact the Wagga City Council on this matter. At this visit, the SADFO explained on-base effluent is treated to the highest standard and it would be unlikely that the base would be the source of effluent on the resident's property should water flow from Kapooka during a significant weather event. The SADFO encouraged and suggested options for the resident to conduct independent testing; noting the use of septic tanks on properties within the area could result in effluent flowing in stormwater.

No further complaints or concerns from the resident have been received.

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