

**Response provided to journalist
17 December 2018**

Questions:

Regarding RAAF Base Edinburgh investigation:

- What are the next steps for the defence department to ensure the health and safety RAAF personnel who worked on the base?
- What are the next steps for the defence department to ensure the health and safety of residents and businesses affected by PFAS contamination?
- Do the defence department have a plan to aid or fast-track Edinburgh personnel to get themselves blood-tested for PFAS?
- Will base personnel and nearby property owners be compensated if health problems arise?
- What steps will be undertaken to rid the base and the surrounding area of PFAS contamination?

Response:

The Department of Defence is conducting a detailed environmental investigation into the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Edinburgh as a result of the historical use of legacy firefighting foams at the Base.

The second stage of the investigation, the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI), has been completed, with the findings presented at a community engagement event in December 2018.

The next step is a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA), which has now commenced to provide a better understanding of the potential PFAS exposure pathways and exposure risks to people, plants and animals in the Investigation Area, both on and off base. The HHERA is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2019.

Bore owners in the Investigation Area are encouraged to complete a Water Use Survey which is available on the Defence PFAS website and contact the Edinburgh Investigation team to discuss bore sampling to provide data for the HHERA.

The DSI and the HHERA findings will be used to develop a PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP) for the RAAF Base Edinburgh and the broader Investigation Area. The plan will outline appropriate options for PFAS management and remediation and is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2019.

Defence will be installing a water treatment plant to remove PFAS from shallow aquifers which are in close proximity to the Fire Training Area. This plant is expected to be operational in early 2019.

Furthermore, Defence will undertake a four month trial of a PFAS Soil Treatment Plant at RAAF Base Edinburgh. The aim of the trial is to treat 2,500 tonnes of soil from an area with known elevated levels of PFAS. The plant, which is in the process

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of being delivered from the United Kingdom, is expected to be installed and commissioned in early 2019.

Further information on blood testing and the epidemiological study being conducted by the Australian National University can be obtained from the Australian Government Department of Health on: 1800 941 180 or via health.pfas@health.gov.au or by visiting www.health.gov.au/pfas

According to The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth), there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. As these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution.

In May 2018, enHealth's advice was reaffirmed by an independent Expert Health Panel which was established by the Department of Health.

Additional information about the detailed environmental investigation into the nature and extent of PFAS at, and around, RAAF Base Edinburgh is available at: www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Edinburgh/