

Response provided to journalist

12 July 2018

Question

I just had some questions about the advertisement that appeared in the paper on Saturday.

- What is exactly happening at the moment with the investigation and management program?
- When did on base sampling start?
- Has sampling started off base yet this month?
- Why is it being done?
- What will people see?
- Has fish sampling begun yet?
- Why is that being done?
- How is it being conducted?
- When are results expected from these surveys?
- When will they be available to the public?

Response

Defence is conducting a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) at Lavarack Barracks. The DSI will involve sampling of groundwater, surface water, soil and sediment within the investigation area.

Collection of samples on base began in mid-June 2018, with off-base sampling set to commence in mid-July 2018. During off-base sampling, people may see a drilling rig for the collection of soil samples, and the installation of groundwater monitoring wells. People may also see field staff collecting water and sediment samples from the Ross River and other local waterways.

The above information has been communicated through a letterbox-drop factsheet to residents within the investigation area, and via advertisements in the local newspaper to the broader community.

The objective of the broader environmental investigation is to identify the nature and extent of PFAS presence in the environment due to the historical use of old formulations of firefighting foam at Lavarack Barracks.

As part of the initial stage of the investigation, Defence caught 13 fish upstream of Aplin's Weir located within the Lavarack Barracks investigation area. Fillet samples were analysed for PFAS and the results were provided to Queensland Health, who conducted an assessment to determine the safe amounts of fish from this area that could be consumed by recreational fishers, both adults and children. The

assessment was limited to PFOS and PFHxS concentrations in edible fish fillet samples collected.

The Queensland Health assessment found that the concentrations of PFOS and PFHxS were not at levels that would change the standard fish consumption guidelines issued by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ), which are protective of exposure to other substances, specifically mercury.

The additional fish sampling scheduled as part of the Lavarack Barracks DSI will improve the understanding of the potential PFAS impact from consumption of local seafood caught by recreational fishers. Defence will continue to provide relevant authorities, including Queensland Health, with sampling results to assist in providing or updating precautionary advice on minimising PFAS exposure if required.

The DSI Report is expected to be completed and released to the public in early 2019. It will include sampling results as well as the findings of the water-use surveys.