

Response provided to journalist  
17 July 2018

**Question**

I heard the Assistant Secretary for PFAS Investigations on ABC Southern Queensland radio this morning speaking about the treatment of water from the Oakey Aquifer and I have a follow-up questions regarding what is occurring out at Oakey at the moment.

- How many litres of water has so far been treated from the aquifer at Oakey that was impacted by PFAS?
- How does this water treatment process work? Is the water taken from the aquifer and then returned?
- How long does the department expect to continue this treatment process in Oakey?
- On the ABC it was mentioned that the water was now at a “suitable recreation levels”, what does that mean?
- Does the Department still recommend Oakey residents not drink or use the local water?
- Anything else the Department would like to say on this issue.

**Response**

Defence has installed a water treatment plant at the Army Aviation Centre Oakey to treat some per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) source areas on base. The plant extracts contaminated groundwater from a bore near the former fire station and filters this water through a regenerable synthetic resin with ion exchange functionality. The treated water is then reinjected into the aquifer to reduce the amount of contamination leaving the base. This process has been endorsed by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

The plant has been operating since September 2017 and, as of Wednesday 11 July, has treated 26,205,000 litres of water. There is currently no planned end date for operations.

Health-based guidance values—developed by the Federal Department of Health from Food Standards Australia New Zealand tolerable daily intakes—have only been applied to three types of PFAS - perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS). The water treatment plant has extracted PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS to below the limit of reporting, this means that, if any of these substances remain in the treated water, the concentration is too small to be reliably detected by laboratories. The limit of reporting is well below the Health-based guidance values for drinking and recreational water use. For reference, the drinking Health-based guidance values for PFOS is 0.07 parts per billion.

PFAS has affected some bores within the management area. Defence has provided alternative water sources to properties that rely on these bores for drinking water. As a long term solution, Defence offered to fund connections to the town water network

for all affected properties. A total of 36 properties have accepted the offer and are now connected to town water.