

Questions:

I'm writing a piece on this submission to the PFAS inquiry - in it the State (SA) Government accuses Defence of withholding information despite requests, and of a lack of transparency - I am looking at the Federal Government's response to the inquiry now, but could you please respond to those specific accusations?

Response:

Defence rejects any assertion that it has not been responsive or forthcoming with information associated with its PFAS investigation at RAAF Base Edinburgh and continues to regularly engage with the South Australian Environmental Protection Authority (SA EPA).

During these engagements SA EPA has expressed that they are satisfied with the level of engagement from Defence. The Assistant Secretary of PFAS Investigation and Management Branch met with senior SA EPA officials on two occasions at the SA EPA offices in Adelaide. These meetings provided an opportunity for SA EPA and Defence to discuss the progress of investigations, ensure that SA EPA had no concerns with the data or information being provided by Defence and to check if SA EPA required any additional information. At the most recent meeting, held on 15 May 2018, a senior SA EPA official noted they were comfortable with the data being provided and the level of engagement.

Defence has promptly met all reporting obligations under the South Australian *Environment Protection Act 1993* and has never refused to provide a notification under section 83A of the Act.

Defence has held Project Control Group meetings with key stakeholders, including SA EPA, approximately every six weeks since the commencement of the project in November 2016. These meetings are all minuted with action items. Defence has offered to send data to representatives prior to these meetings but have been advised that it is not required.

In addition to formal reporting, the Defence RAAF Base Edinburgh project team regularly liaises with the SA EPA to provide updates on the investigation.

SA EPA have fully supported all Community Walk in Sessions for the RAAF Base Edinburgh PFAS Investigation by attending and standing together with Defence and talking to the community when requested.

Defence has provided all proposed community flyers to SA EPA prior to distribution to the community, including the flyer notifying of the expansion of the Investigation Area.

SA EPA have consistently advised in Project Control Group meetings that they are comfortable with the SA EPA approved Contaminated Site Auditor engaged by

Response provided to journalist
26 July 2018

Defence to undertake an independent audit of the PFAS Investigation at RAAF Base Edinburgh. SA EPA have also advised that if the Site Auditor has approved key documents then the SA EPA are comfortable with the robustness of the process.

Defence remains committed to being open and transparent in the conduct of its PFAS site investigations and has and will continue to share with relevant state agencies its investigation data and findings.

Response provided to journalist
26 July 2018