

Response provided to journalist
20 June 2018

Question

Can you provide us with the preliminary testing results?

When will the detailed environmental investigation into the presence of PFAS around Amberley be completed?

Response

Between 9-17 April 2018, preliminary sampling of a small number of edible fish caught from seven sampling sites along the Bremer River and Warrill Creek was conducted as part of the environmental investigation. The aim of obtaining this information was to inform the Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) that commenced in May 2018.

The edible fish sampled included perch, mullet, eel and catfish. Three prawns were also caught at one site. A total of 22 edible portions were tested for PFAS including 21 portions of fish (as fish fillet or liver samples) and one combined sample of the three prawns. Two whole fish samples were also tested for PFAS.

PFAS was detected in all of the samples tested. Nineteen samples tested exceeded the trigger levels for perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) + perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) developed by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ). Exceeding a FSANZ trigger point indicates the need for further investigation, which will be conducted as part of the HHRA.

Defence detailed environmental investigations into PFAS are conducted in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999 (NEPM). There are three main steps to the investigation process:

- A Preliminary Site Investigation – completed.
- A Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) - in progress.
- A Human Health and an Ecological Risk Assessment - in progress.

The DSI involved a comprehensive sampling program with the results currently undergoing analysis. A report is being prepared and is expected to be finalised in the third quarter of 2018 after the completion of result analysis and consultation with relevant State authorities.

Defence will hold a community engagement event after the finalisation of the report to present the findings to the community. This will include a discussion on the initial fish sampling results. The report will also contain a Preliminary Biota Sampling Report as an appendix.

Additional fish sampling, including a greater range of fish species, will be conducted as part of the HHRA and Ecological Risk Assessment. The outcomes will be provided to the community on completion of the assessments expected in late 2018.

Further information, including an investigation timeline can be found in the latest Community Newsletter:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Amberley/publications.asp>