

Questions:

Why did the Australian Government Department of Defence take at least eight (8) years to notify both Hobsons Bay City Council and Wyndham City Council of the possible and indeed probable PFAS contamination problems at RAAF Base Williams in Laverton?

Response:

Defence conducted a Preliminary Site Investigation into the use and storage of legacy firefighting foam at RAAF Williams (Laverton) in 2017. Based on the findings of the Investigation, it was determined that further investigations were required. A detailed environmental investigation has now commenced to assess the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at and surrounding the Base. This is the first PFAS detailed environmental investigation to be conducted at RAAF Williams (Laverton).

Defence is committed to keeping the community surrounding the Base, including the Hobsons Bay and Wyndham City Councils, informed about the progress and findings of the investigation. Defence has held two information sessions to discuss the investigation with the community and continues to provide updates through the investigation website, emails, newsletters and the dedicated information line.

Defence informed the Hobsons Bay and Wyndham City Councils about the commencement of the detailed environmental investigation in July 2018 and has met with both councils to discuss the investigation.

Defence relies on the current health advice provided by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) which states: "There is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects. Because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends that human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution."

Further information about the investigation is available at:
www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/williams/ or through the investigation information line: 1800 549 828.