

Response to Journalist

5 October 2018

Question

Just seeking a response to a few questions on the Jervis Bay PFAS investigation after reading the September Newsletter update and some developments at the Jervis Bay School.

Was the contamination of lilly pilly trees discovered through testing by defence?

1. Does defence support the removal of the trees from Jervis Bay School?
2. Did finding PFAS levels in the trees raise any new concerns?

Response

The Department of Defence is currently conducting a detailed environmental investigation into per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and around, the Jervis Bay Training Area.

As part of the environmental investigation Defence detected low levels of PFAS in the fruit of the Lilly Pilly trees at Jervis Bay Primary School.

While the Lilly Pilly fruit presented a very low PFAS exposure risk, Defence understands that the ACT Government, as the operator of the school, has removed the trees. Defence provides relevant authorities with all sampling data to inform their exposure risk decisions. The decision to remove the trees, and therefore the exposure risk, is a matter for the school and relevant administrative authorities.

A preliminary risk assessment for the consumption of the fruit by school children determined that the fruit was not a PFAS exposure risk unless it was consumed in very high quantities.

The detection of PFAS in these fruit trees did not raise new concerns for Defence. Sampling of the fruit was conducted as part of the Detailed Site Investigation to inform the Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA). The HHRA report is anticipated to be completed by the end of this calendar year. Once complete, the findings of the HHRA will be presented to the Wreck Bay and Jervis Bay communities.