

**Response provided to journalist
19 October 2018**

Questions:

Defence is installing two water treatment plants at the Tindal RAAF Base.

Can you advise how far this program has progressed?

Are there photographs of the plants we can obtain?

Response:

Defence is committed to managing and remediating PFAS contamination in Katherine. One of the primary management objectives of Defence is to reduce and/or where possible, remove PFAS exposure pathways for affected communities. This is based on the guidance issued by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) when assessing and managing any potential exposure risks to human health posed by PFAS. The enHealth guidance statements advise there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFAS causes adverse human health effects. However, because these chemicals persist in humans and the environment, enHealth recommends human exposure to these chemicals is minimised as a precaution. In May 2018 this advice was reaffirmed by the findings of the independent Expert Health Panel for PFAS which took into account evidence available from both Australian and international scientific research.

In addition to the interim Katherine Power and Water Corporation water treatment plant to remove potential exposure through drinking water, Defence is installing two water treatment plants at key PFAS source areas located on RAAF Base Tindal. The water treatment plants will treat extracted groundwater with the aim of reducing the amount of PFAS within the environment that is able to migrate further from the Base. The first treatment plant is under construction at the Fire Training Area and will be completed soon. Once constructed the plant will undergo a commissioning period with the plant expected to be fully operational in first quarter 2019. The second treatment plant at the Fire Station Area is expected to be operational around mid-2019.

The additional water treatment plants will form part of Defence's actions under the PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP). The PMAP will present options to manage and reduce the risks of PFAS exposure near RAAF Base Tindal and outline a plan for ongoing monitoring. Defence is currently finalising the PMAP, with expected completion in late 2018.

Imagery is available at:

<http://defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/tindal/managementactivities.asp>