

Response to journalist:

In 2015, the Department of Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation into the nature and extent of per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination at and around RAAF Base Williamtown. Defence is currently finalising the environmental investigation that has been conducted by industry experts following nationally agreed environmental investigation processes.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, Defence will be releasing the report for the final stage of the detailed environmental investigation – the comprehensive Ecological Risk Assessment - which was undertaken to further understand and assess potential exposure risks of PFAS contamination to the environment. The outcomes of the detailed environmental investigation, including the Environmental Site Assessment and Human Health Risk Assessment, are being used to develop a PFAS Management Area Plan that will outline the best management and remediation solutions for the unique circumstances at Williamtown.

The Australian Government is committed to support local communities affected by PFAS contamination and has to date initiated the following actions:

- investing \$55.2 million for a drinking water program for property owners in communities surrounding Army Aviation Centre Oakey and RAAF Bases Williamtown, Tindal and Pearce, who use bores as their primary source of drinking water, and where PFAS is present at levels above the drinking water guidance value;
- investing \$55m for affected communities of Williamtown, NSW and Oakey, Qld to reduce exposure, manage the environmental impacts, and provide additional dedicated mental health and counselling services (\$3.5m), a voluntary blood testing program (\$4.5m), and an epidemiological study into potential health effects from exposure to PFAS (\$4m);
- investing \$12.5 million for a National Research Program into the Human Health Effects of Prolonged Exposure to PFAS; and
- investing up to \$13 million for a PFAS Remediation Research Program to fund research into clean-up technologies to remove PFAS from the environment.

Based on the knowledge and evidence available at this time, the Australian Government is not considering a land purchase program as a result of PFAS contamination.