

**Response provided to journalist
29 March 2019**

Question:

I'm after some more information clarifying what the preliminary findings of the PFAS investigation here in Cairns means for the investigation:

- In layman's terms, what do these results mean for people living in the vicinity of either the tanks or HMAS Cairns?
- Are investigators surprised by these results?
- Is there any health risk to people from the amount of PFAS found in ground and surface water during this initial stage?

Response:

Defence has now completed the preliminary site investigation as part of the environmental investigation into the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on and in the surrounding area of HMAS Cairns and the former World War II (WWII) Royal Australian Navy fuel installation.

Initial sampling of surface water and groundwater was conducted in late 2018 – early 2019. A table explaining the types and number of samples taken can be found in the most recent factsheet at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/Docs/Cairns/Factsheets/201903.Cairns.PSI%20Factsheet.pdf>

The Preliminary Site Investigation data will assist in the development of a conceptual site model and sampling plan, which will be used in the next stage of the investigation – the Detailed Site Investigation.

The detailed site investigation will involve the sampling and analysis of soil, sediment, surface water, animals (fish, crustaceans) and groundwater from within the investigation areas. This will identify the extent of PFAS contamination and determine if a human health and /or ecological risk assessment is required to evaluate potential PFAS exposure to people and the environment.

Once the investigation is complete, a detailed report, including sampling results, will be prepared and shared with relevant government, regulatory bodies and the wider community. The Detailed Site Investigation Report is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2019.

It is important to note that the Base and surrounding properties are serviced by reliable potable mains water (town water) supplied by Cairns Regional Council as the primary water source. This is important, as the primary route of exposure to PFAS in humans is through the ingestion of impacted water or through the consumption of food which has been exposed to impacted water or soil. As part of the investigation, information is being collected through a Water Use Survey to find out more about water use near the Base.

Residents who live within the investigation areas are encouraged to complete the Water Use Survey to assist the investigation. To do so, please contact the HMAS

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