

**Response provided to journalist  
29 March 2019**

**Question:**

I understand the Department of Defence has released the preliminary findings from its investigation into the historical use of per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at the HMAS Cairns naval base and the former Royal Australian Navy fuel tanks at Edge Hill.

Can I get a copy of these findings and any relevant media releases sent through?

**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. This is part of a wider program of 27 environmental investigations into PFAS contamination across the Defence estate.

Initial sampling of surface water and groundwater was conducted in late 2018 to 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>

In summary, a total of 26 samples were collected from across the HMAS Cairns Investigation Area (21 samples) and Navy Fuel Installation Investigation Area (5 samples). As some of the results were above the screening criteria, the data collected 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.