

**Response provided to journalist
09 May 2019**

Question:

We have been contacted by a group of researchers looking at a way to stop PFAS leaching from concrete.

They also claim there are already tried methods for removing PFAS from soils and water, but they are expensive. Has RAAF considered any plans to try to remove PFAS from soil, waterways or concrete?

Also, can we get an update on the PFAS situation in Gippsland? Thanks

Response:

Research into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) remediation technologies is a priority for Defence and the Australian Government.

Defence is committed to responsibly managing the environment in which it operates and manages on behalf of the Australian community. The PFAS Investigation and Management Program, conducted at 27 sites across Australia, is a reflection of this commitment.

Defence is committed to minimising the impacts of PFAS contamination and has made the following investments into PFAS management and remediation with the aim of breaking potential exposure pathways:

- Defence has undertaken a trial of a concrete sealant and continues to engage with industry in relation to technologies for the effective treatment of PFAS within concrete, soils and waterways.
- A soil washing plant is being trialled at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Edinburgh with initial trial results expected in the second quarter of 2019.
- The Fire Training Area at RAAF Base Williamtown has been excavated, removing 6350 cubic metres of contaminated soil from a key source area.
- Drain maintenance to reduce PFAS migration was conducted at Oakey and Williamtown, with approximately 21,183 tonnes of soil removed to licenced facilities.
- Defence is currently operating eight water treatment plants, including the Katherine Town Water Plant, with a further two expected to be in operation by the end of 2019. Defence has treated over 2 billion litres of water through PFAS water treatment plants.
- Town water connections have been completed for residents in Oakey and are ongoing for residents in Williamtown. As at 22 March 2019, a total of 339 town water connections have been completed across the two communities.

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- Rain water tanks have been installed at 66 properties in the Katherine region.
- Defence is investing in a variety of treatment approaches to manage and reduce the impact of PFAS contamination within the environment and has funded 10 PFAS research projects valued at approximately \$3.5 million.

In addition to Defence's PFAS remediation measures, Defence is supporting studies and trials to better understand the properties of PFAS and how it can be remediated. Defence has provided up to \$13 million in funding to the Australian Research Council for their Special Research Initiative on PFAS, and continues to support the Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment.

Defence is dedicated to being open and transparent about its environmental investigations, management and remediation efforts at PFAS-affected Defence bases and in surrounding communities.

Defence engages with affected communities on a regular basis. In addition to public community events, such as information and walk-in sessions, Defence continues to work with communities through dedicated hotlines, newsletters and one-on-one meetings.

Defence collaborates with State and Territory governments as well as local councils by sharing the results and outcomes of its investigations and enabling relevant agencies to develop and issue advice to local communities.

In 2018 Defence completed a detailed environmental investigation to identify the nature and extent of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, RAAF Base East Sale.

The outcomes from the investigation have been used to develop the PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP).

The aim of the PMAP is to provide options to manage and reduce the risks of PFAS exposure as a result of Defence activities. The PMAP will further guide Defence's actions to manage known sources of contamination, reduce PFAS migration, and manage identified exposure risks to the community or environment.

The PMAP is available at the following link:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/docs/EastSale/Reports/RAAFEastSalePFASManagementAreaPlan.pdf>