



RAAF Base Tindal - Interim Human Health Risk Assessment

PFAS Investigation and Management Program

Interim Human Health Risk Assessment

In March 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation to identify the nature and extent of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of, RAAF Base Tindal as a result of the historical use of legacy firefighting foams at the Base.

The investigation includes a Preliminary Site Investigation, Detailed Site Investigation, a Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA), and an Ecological Risk Assessment. Defence engaged Coffey, independent environmental consultants, to conduct the investigation including the development of an Interim Human Health Risk Assessment (IHHRA).

The purpose of the IHHRA is to assess the potential risks of human exposure to PFAS when residents conduct certain activities. The IHHRA will be followed by a comprehensive HHRA that will look at potential exposures in more detail.

The IHHRA provides information to allow residents to make informed decisions about ways to reduce their potential exposure to PFAS.

The purpose of the IHHRA is not to provide specific health advice.

The IHHRA report is currently being reviewed by relevant government agencies and is expected to be finalised and released to the public in mid-December 2017.

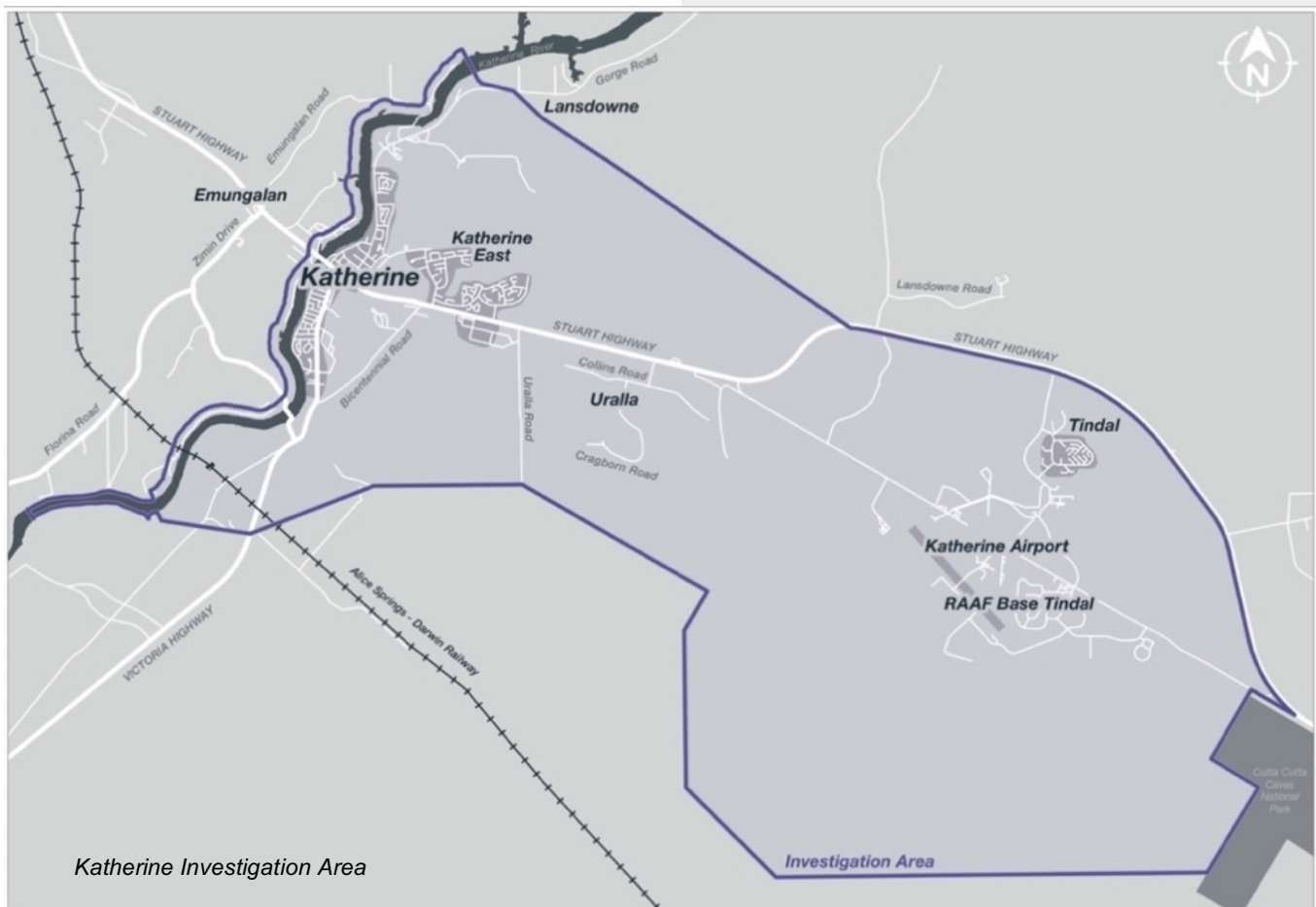
A broader risk assessment to expand on the IHHRA has commenced. The comprehensive HHRA will include the findings from additional information collected during December 2017 and early 2018, to gain a better understanding of the risks.

Defence expects to release the final HHRA in early 2018.

How does PFAS move from the Base?

PFAS moves off-base at RAAF Base Tindal by leaching into groundwater, and through surface water run-off via drains and Tindal Creek.

The PFAS contaminated groundwater enters the Tindal Aquifer and moves in a westerly direction into the Katherine River. Tindal Creek flows through Uralla and discharges to the Katherine River in Katherine South.





How was information for the IHHRA collected?

Samples collected from water, soil, plants, fish and animal products were used to inform the IHHRA. Most of the samples were collected during the dry season and further sampling for the comprehensive HHRA will occur during the wet season. The dry season samples may represent the worst case scenario due to increased use of PFAS impacted water for irrigation or watering.

Many Katherine residents have provided access to their properties for samples of surface water, groundwater from bores, soils, plants (including locally grown fruits and vegetables), and animals or animal products (poultry eggs) which have been used in this report.

Summary of initial investigation findings

The findings of the sampling for the IHHRA are in the process of being reviewed and finalised for inclusion in the IHHRA report. The initial findings of the IHHRA have identified that the following activities may pose a risk to residents under certain conditions:

- Drinking water from PFAS contaminated bores in the Investigation Area.
- Drinking water from the Katherine River downstream of the Stuart Highway.
- Eating eggs where bore water that is unsuitable for drinking is used to water poultry.
- Young children eating large quantities of dry season, fruit and vegetables irrigated with bore water within the Investigation Area.
- Eating fish and crustaceans caught in Tindal Creek and in the Katherine River downstream of the Stuart Highway (including as far south as the Daly River).
- Swimming in pools filled with bore water that is above the recreational values for PFAS.

What does this mean for me?

The IHHRA informs residents of potential health risks for PFAS exposure via ingestion. It may be used by government agencies and authorities to provide information or advice for future actions, such as local food consumption or water use.

For all residents living within the Investigation Area, the IHHRA recommends restricting the following activities to reduce exposure to PFAS:

- Avoid drinking PFAS contaminated groundwater (sourced from a bore) or water drawn from the Katherine River downstream of the Katherine Bridge.

- Avoid or minimise using contaminated groundwater for filling swimming pools or paddling pools.
- Avoid or minimise consumption of eggs from poultry that are watered with groundwater or surface water contaminated with PFAS.
- Combine consumption of fruit and vegetables grown with PFAS contaminated bore water, with other sources of fruit and vegetables grown outside of the Investigation Area.
- Combine consumption of fish or prawns collected from the Katherine River, with other sources of fish or prawns collected outside the IA.

Next steps

Community Survey

A new Community Survey has been released to inform the HHRA and obtain more information about how water is sourced and used by the community. Information collected will increase our understanding of the type and amount of locally sourced foods consumed by the community. The Community Survey is available online at www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Tindal or by contacting the community hotline on 1800 316 813.

Additional sampling

Samples of plants, fish and animal products from potentially affected areas will continue to be taken and analysed in December 2017. These samples will be used to fill data gaps in the investigation and contribute to a better understanding of the interim findings.

Keeping the community informed

Defence will continue to keep the community informed on the outcomes of further sampling and the implementation of management plans. As well as community information sessions, updates will be provided through the project website, direct mail and information sheets as new information becomes available.

Contact Information

RAAF Base Tindal community hotline

- **Phone** 1800 316 813
- **Email** PFAS.RAAFBaseTindal@coffey.com
- **Website** www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Tindal
- **Post** PO Box 2213, Palmerston NT 0830

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