Investigation Update

In October 2017, Defence commenced a detailed environmental investigation at Lavarack Barracks and the surrounding area to identify the nature and extent of PFAS in the environment and any potential exposure pathways to humans, plants and animals.

Defence is currently conducting the second stage of the environmental investigation, the Detailed Site Investigation. The data collected in the Detailed Site Investigation will be analysed and published in a report in the second quarter of 2019. The findings of this report will be presented to the community.

Precautionary advice for the consumption of fish in the Lavarack Barracks Investigation Area

Defence has released interim precautionary fish consumption advice for lakes in the Townsville suburb of Idalia based on recommendations from the Queensland Department of Health following the review of sampling results from the Lavarack Environmental Investigation.

Existing signs near Northview Lake, Freshwater Lake and Fairfield Lake advise against recreational fishing in the lakes. The public are advised to continue to observe the advisories against fishing and, in addition, to not consume fish from the lakes in Idalia. As a precaution, any fish caught from ponded sections of Gordon Creek within Idalia should also not be consumed.

The fish sampling has been conducted to support the Lavarack Barracks Environmental Investigation currently underway.

The sampling results, from the Lavarack Barracks investigation, identified levels of types of PFAS - perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) - above the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) investigation trigger levels in fish caught from some of the lakes in Idalia.

Tests concluded that a child would exceed the tolerable daily intake for PFOS and PFHxS (combined) if two to three serves (of 75g) of fish were consumed per week from the lakes in Idalia, and an adult consuming three serves per week (of 150g).

Queensland Health have noted that fish is an important part of a healthy diet and that infrequent consumption (every few months) of a meal of seafood from the area would not make a significant contribution to an individual's overall exposure to PFAS.

In addition, review of sampling results from Ross River found the concentrations of PFOS and PFHxS were not at a level that would change the standard fish consumption guidelines issued by FSANZ which are protective of exposure to other substances, specifically mercury.
The public are reminded of the existing FSANZ advice, which applies across Australia, regarding mercury in fish, most recently published in 2011, that consumption of most species of fish should be limited to two to three serves per week, where a serve is 75 grams for children up to six years and 150 grams for the rest of the population. The FSANZ guideline can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/chemicals/mercury/documents/mif20brochure.pdf.

Map of Lakes in Idalia

Further information

More information on the precautionary advice please visit www.qld.gov.au/PFAS or contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

Further information on the Lavarack Barracks PFAS Environmental Investigation is available online at www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Lavarack/ or via the community information line on 1800 436 688.