



Randwick Barracks

Findings of environmental investigations

During routine environmental investigations undertaken in 2024, Defence identified per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in groundwater on Randwick Barracks.

To understand groundwater use in the area and potential risk to community, Defence surveyed nearby residents and sampled their groundwater bores where permission was granted.

In total, Defence approached 413 residences and 130 surveys on water use were completed. Sampling for PFAS occurred at eight residential bores and one surface water sample was taken from the wetland in Randwick Environmental Park (shown on Figure 1 below).

What are PFAS?

PFAS are manufactured chemicals that have been used globally in many household, commercial and industrial products, including legacy firefighting foams. These foams have historically been used worldwide by both civilian and military authorities because they are effective in fighting liquid fuel fires.

PFAS can travel easily through the environment via surface water and infiltrate through soil into groundwater.

The movement of PFAS into the environment is a concern because these chemicals can accumulate and persist in humans, animals and the environment. PFAS are persistent (not readily broken down) within the environment and can be taken up by people, plants and animals.

What is groundwater?

Groundwater is water found underground in the spaces between soil, sand and rock. The groundwater at Randwick Barracks is part of the Botany Sands Aquifer, which extends from south Centennial Park to Botany Bay. Groundwater from the barracks flows slowly, approximately a few metres a day, in a southerly direction.

As shown in Figure 1 below, there are areas within the Botany Sands Aquifer where groundwater use is prohibited. This does not include Randwick Barracks or the immediate surrounds.

What were the sampling results?

PFAS were detected at similar levels in the eight groundwater samples collected from across the off-site investigation area. The PFAS levels did not exceed the current Australian drinking water guideline values. However, based on information provided by residents, it is understood that groundwater is not used for drinking purposes.

The surface water sample collected from the wetland in Randwick Environment also reported PFAS levels below the drinking water criteria.

For further information about safe levels of PFAS in food and water, please visit the Department of Health and Aged Care website, www.health.gov.au

Can I still use my bore?

Although the levels of PFAS in groundwater did not exceed the current Australian drinking water criteria, these are undergoing review and may be subject to change in 2025. In the meantime, Defence recommends you follow the Department of Health and Aged Care advice to reduce exposure to PFAS where possible. This precautionary advice is based on the ability of these chemicals to persist in humans and the environment, and uncertainties around potential health effects.

If you live south of Randwick Barracks (the direction groundwater flows) and have a groundwater bore, you can request sampling by calling 1800 333 362, or email pfas.enquiry@defence.gov.au

Looking for more information?

Visit Defence's PFAS Investigation and Management Program website, www.defence.gov.au/pfas

Alternatively you can call, **1800 333 362** or email pfas.enquiry@defence.gov.au

Media enquiries

Media enquiries should be directed to Defence Media via email at, media@defence.gov.au



Figure 1 – Property, Investigation Area and Regional Aquifer Boundaries

