



PFAS Management Area Plan completion and next steps

Robertson Barracks

KEY POINTS

- **All actions within the PFAS Management Area Plan for Robertson Barracks have been addressed.**
- **A Final Site Condition Report has been prepared by a contaminated land site auditor accredited by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA).**
- **The report documents the independent assessment by the auditor that the works completed suitably address the actions within the PFAS Management Area Plan.**
- **Defence will continue to monitor PFAS on and around Robertson Barracks, and take further action if required.**
- **The outcomes of the 2018 Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment remain current.**
- **All plans and reports are published on the Defence website.**

What is a PFAS Management Area Plan?

The PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP) sets out Defence's activities to manage the risks from per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on and around Robertson Barracks.

What is a Final Site Condition Report?

The Final Site Condition Report is prepared by a technical advisor to provide an independent assessment of whether Defence has suitably addressed the PFAS management actions detailed in the latest PFAS Management Area Plan.

Technical advisors are NT EPA-accredited environmental auditors engaged by Defence to review the effectiveness of PFAS management activities and to confirm whether remediation has been completed to the extent practicable.

Background

In 2018, Defence completed detailed environmental investigations into PFAS contamination on and around Robertson Barracks.

Investigations determined that most PFAS are found in areas where firefighting foams were previously used and stored. These are called source areas. PFAS moves from these source areas into surface water and groundwater, and can then move off the base into the wider environment.

The PMAP identified that additional investigations were required to inform if any remediation was needed to reduce the amount of PFAS leaving the barracks. These additional investigations commenced in 2018 and concluded in 2024. The investigations confirmed Defence's understanding about PFAS on and around Robertson Barracks.

In 2018, a review of possible PFAS risks to the community surrounding Robertson Barracks was prepared and outlined within the Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment factsheet. The potential risks to people, plants and animals were considered low and acceptable.

A potential exposure risk was identified for consumption of recreationally caught fish and molluscs from Milners Creek and the southern drainage channel. Since the Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment was undertaken, Milners Creek is now within the fenced portion of Robertson Barracks where recreational fishing is not permitted.

In 2025, the risks to plants and animals in Milners Creek and Milners Swamp were re-evaluated using new data and a Darwin-region ecology risk model. The revaluation concluded that the risks to plants and animals in these areas were low and acceptable.

The Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment factsheet and the PMAP are available on the Defence website at: www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/robertson-barracks

Technical Advisor's Final Site Condition Report

Dr Peter Beck, from environmental consultancy firm GHD Pty Ltd, was appointed as the Technical Advisor to review the actions in the PMAP for Robertson Barracks. He prepared a Final Site Condition Report detailing the status of the actions against the PMAP requirements.

The Technical Advisor's determinations are summarised below. A full copy of the report is available on the Defence website at: www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/robertson-barracks



PMAP Completion

Defence has addressed the actions set out in the PMAP as summarised below:

PFAS Management Area Plan response action	Summary of completed action and Technical Advisor's assessment
1. Discontinue use of legacy aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) containing PFAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy AFFF use ceased prior to PMAP commencement Technical Advisor considers action complete.
2. Manage use of AFFF containing other PFAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use limited to emergency response Technical Advisor deems action satisfactory.
3. Implement Occupational Health and Safety measures for intrusive maintenance or construction workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Protection Equipment and controls in place Technical Advisor finds measures appropriate and ongoing.
4. Restrict groundwater abstraction within impacted areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstraction controls implemented Technical Advisor supports continued management.
5. Implement Ongoing Monitoring Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OMP established Technical Advisor supports ongoing long-term monitoring.
6. Avoid accidental damage or destruction of groundwater monitoring wells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls in place to protect groundwater monitoring wells Technical Advisor supports continued application.
7. Continue to implement construction management procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction management procedures in place align with Defence standards Technical Advisor considers action complete.
8. Reduce access to Milners Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fencing installed to limit access to Milners Creek Technical Advisor deems action complete and effective.

Next Steps

Defence will now:

- continue monitoring surface water and groundwater on and around Robertson Barracks, with the next round of sampling scheduled for April 2026
- continue publishing monitoring results on the Defence website and provide results letters to people who have sampling occur on their land
- implement long term management actions on and around Robertson Barracks, including opportunistic remediation if areas are subject to redevelopment.

The Technical Advisor has endorsed these next steps and the NT EPA has been informed the actions within the PMAP have been addressed at Robertson Barracks.

If future monitoring results indicate changes to Defence's understanding of PFAS on and around Robertson Barracks, Defence will respond and take appropriate action.



Frequently Asked Questions

Are PFAS still leaving the base and is there a risk to people who live nearby?

It is unfeasible to remove PFAS from the environment entirely. A small amount of PFAS remains on and still leaves Robertson Barracks mostly via surface water. There are currently no practical remediation techniques that would reduce this further.

The 2023-2024 Ongoing Monitoring Report found the overall human health risk to the community is low.

Health

What are the human health impacts from PFAS exposure?

Research on the health effects of PFAS in Australia and internationally is continuously evolving and health guidelines for PFAS differ around the world. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is the leading agency responsible for Australian health guidance on PFAS. Information about health impacts from PFAS exposure is available online:

www.health.gov.au/topics/environmental-health/about/environmental-toxins-and-contaminants/pfas

Is blood testing offered to residents living near Defence bases?

No, Defence does not offer a blood testing program for residents living near Defence bases. All Australians are expected to have detectable levels of PFAS in their blood owing to its use in many commonly used products. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's enHealth Guidance Statement provides advice on blood testing for PFAS contamination:

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/enhealth-guidance-statement-per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas

Defence

Who has Defence collaborated with throughout the PFAS Investigation and Management Program?

Responding to PFAS contamination is a complex issue. Since the program was established in 2015, Defence has continuously supported and collaborated on a wide range of research projects with government agencies, industry, academia, and other research partners.

All sampling implemented as part of the ongoing monitoring program is undertaken by independent and accredited laboratories and the results have been shared with the environmental regulator.

What ongoing support will Defence provide to the community?

Defence's priority is to support communities impacted by PFAS contamination on and around Defence bases by reducing their exposure risk. Ongoing monitoring of the base will continue to monitor the long term effectiveness of the PMAP actions that have been addressed and as agreed to by the technical adviser. Monitoring results will continue to be provided to the environmental regulator and be published on the Defence website.

Supporting ADF Personnel

The health and safety of our personnel, both current and former, is a primary concern for Defence, and for the Australian Government. Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs have a number of services available to support Defence personnel in relation to PFAS exposure. Current and former personnel who suspect that they have been exposed to PFAS as a result of their employment with Defence are encouraged to call 1800 333 362 for more information about the support services available.

Contact Us



1800 333 362



pfas.enquiry@defence.gov.au

Scan the QR code to find out more about
Defence's PFAS Investigation and
Management Program.

