



## April 2026 Remediation and monitoring update

### Swartz Barracks

#### KEY POINTS

- **Defence completed investigations into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on and around Swartz Barracks in 2018.**
- **Eight source areas were found requiring remediation or further investigation.**
- **In 2019 Defence developed a PFAS Management Area Plan outlining the proposed remediation and management actions. This Plan is currently being updated.**
- **Soil stabilisation and capping works were completed at four source areas in 2021 and 2025.**
- **Defence does routine sampling every April and October as part of its Ongoing Monitoring Program. The April and October 2025 sampling results were consistent with historical levels.**
- **In 2025 and 2026, Defence also sampled additional locations to the west of the monitoring area.**
- **The additional sampling has provided Defence with a broader understanding of PFAS impacts in groundwater and surface water and how PFAS is likely moving from the base.**

#### What are PFAS?

PFAS are manufactured chemicals that have been used in Australia and globally in many common household products and specialty applications. Aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) containing PFAS have historically been used worldwide by both civilian and military authorities because they are effective in fighting liquid fuel fires.

The movement of PFAS from source areas into the environment has become a concern because these chemicals can persist in humans, animals and the environment.

#### Background

In October 2018, Defence completed investigations to better understand per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on and around Swartz Barracks, resulting from historical use of firefighting foams on the base.

This included a detailed investigation of groundwater, surface water, soil and sediment on and around the base. A human health and ecological risk assessment was also completed.

The investigations found that PFAS are mostly concentrated in areas where firefighting foams were previously disposed of, used or stored. These are referred to as source areas.

Findings from the investigations were used to develop a PFAS Management Area Plan. The Plan sets out Defence’s activities to manage the risks from PFAS contamination on and around the base, and is being updated. Defence continues to work collaboratively with the community, the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, Queensland Health and other key stakeholders to manage PFAS impacts.

#### Remediation activities

Defence is remediating known source areas of PFAS contamination at Swartz Barracks, to minimise PFAS leaving the base. Remediation activities focus on reducing the movement of PFAS from soil to surface water and groundwater, and removing PFAS from groundwater in source areas.

A groundwater treatment plant has been in operation at Swartz Barracks since 2017. This treatment plant removes PFAS from groundwater and reduces the amount of PFAS leaving the base. To date, over 404 million litres of PFAS contaminated water has been treated.

Defence is currently assessing options to improve the effectiveness of PFAS groundwater treatment at Swartz Barracks, focusing on groundwater leaving the base to the west.

The following table sets out the status of source areas remediation actions.

PFAS source area	Remediation action
Former fire training ground	Soil stabilisation was <b>completed in 2021</b> .
Former fire station and foam training area	Capping of contaminated soil was <b>completed in 2025</b> .
Former fuel compound and hot refuel area	Disposal of concrete bunds to a licensed waste facility, and capping of contaminated soil in the northern area was <b>completed in 2025</b> .
Hot refuel area and AFFF settling tank	Soil stabilisation, reinstatement and capping of stabilised soil was <b>completed in 2025</b> .
AFFF storage and de-canting area	Off-site disposal of contaminated soil to a licensed waster facility and capping of remaining area is <b>scheduled for 2026</b> .
AFFF settling tank	Requires further investigation.



## Remediation methods

### Soil stabilisation

Remediation of three source areas was completed in 2025. This involved a combination of methods called soil stabilisation and capping.

Soil stabilisation involves digging the contaminated soil out of the source area and treating it with activated carbon to stabilise the PFAS. This reduces its ability to wash out into storm water and groundwater.

The treated soil is then moved back to the area, capped with a material that water does not easily pass through, and covered with a clean layer of topsoil and grass to reduce erosion.



Excavation at the Former fuel compound.

### Groundwater treatment

A groundwater treatment plant pumps groundwater into a plant to remove the PFAS. This treatment plant removes PFAS from groundwater and reduces the amount of PFAS leaving the base. Since 2017, over 404 million litres of PFAS contaminated water has been treated at Swartz Barracks.

## Ongoing monitoring

The Ongoing Monitoring Plan outlines what Defence is routinely sampling (e.g. soil, surface water, groundwater and sediment), where the sampling will take place, and how often.

This ensures Defence maintains an up-to-date understanding of where PFAS is located and at what concentrations. This understanding informs management actions that aim to minimise exposure risk to the community and environment.

Ongoing monitoring on and around Swartz Barracks occurs every April and October. The monitoring plan is reviewed regularly and Defence updates the monitoring frequency and/or locations of sampling as required in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

### Number of samples collected and analysed between April 2025 and October 2025

Groundwater	Surface water	Sediment
Groundwater is water beneath the earth's surface. It often supplies bores, wells or springs.	Surface water is water that collects on the ground and can be in the form of creeks, rivers, lakes, wetlands, oceans and more.	Sediment is made of broken down remains of rocks, minerals, plants, and animals that is moved and deposited to a new location.
<b>119 samples collected from 111 groundwater monitoring locations.</b>	<b>17 samples collected from 17 surface water monitoring locations.</b>	<b>22 samples collected from 22 sediment monitoring locations.</b>

### April 2025 – October 2025 Ongoing Monitoring Report

An Ongoing Monitoring Report collates and interprets PFAS sampling results from the Ongoing Monitoring Plan. The latest report also compares the results of the new sampling data to past data collected since 2018. The report will be published on the Defence website later this year: [www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/swartz](http://www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/swartz).

### What does the 2025 Ongoing Monitoring Report tell us?

PFAS levels in samples collected in routine locations in April and October 2025 were similar to historic levels. Defence has also sampled groundwater at additional locations, to the west of the locations that are routinely monitored. More on that below.

Defence assesses the sample results against the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. These guidelines were recently updated so Defence now tests samples so that they can detect PFAS at levels that allow assessment with the new stricter Guidelines. This means some sampling locations detected PFAS above the guidelines for the first time. But because the water sources sampled are not used for drinking, the human health risk levels are low.



## Additional monitoring – Western sampling area

Additional sampling outside of the Ongoing Monitoring Program has been conducted to the west of Swartz Barracks. This additional sampling commenced following a PFAS detection in groundwater in 2025 to the west of the area routinely monitored. Sampling in 2025 and early 2026 has provided Defence with a better understanding of the extent of PFAS impacts in groundwater and surface water to the west of the Swartz Barracks Management Area and how PFAS is likely moving from the base.

PFAS in groundwater above the new Australian Drinking Water Guidelines have primarily been detected in groundwater bores adjacent to Oakey Creek. It is likely that PFAS impacts to groundwater are from a combination of PFAS impacted groundwater migrating west from Swartz Barracks and PFAS impacted surface water infiltrating downwards to the water table.

The ongoing monitoring program and additional sampling to the west of Swartz Barracks tells Defence how PFAS is moving and the extent of infiltration from Oakey Creek. Monitoring results and a remediation action plan will help Defence develop potential future management actions.

Defence is working with Queensland agencies including the Department of Environment Tourism, Science and Innovation, Department of Primary Industries and Queensland Health, regarding the western detections and next steps.

## Next steps

Over the next 12 months Defence will:

- Update the Swartz Barracks PFAS Management Area Plan.
- Complete remediation at the last known source area at Swartz Barracks, the AFFF Storage and Decanting Area.
- Assess options to improve the effectiveness of PFAS groundwater treatment at Swartz Barracks.
- Continue monitoring to further understand any changes in PFAS concentrations.
- Continue to keep the community informed about the management and ongoing monitoring of PFAS on and around Swartz Barracks.



*Remediated grass following soil excavation and stabilisation at the hot refuel area.*

## Looking for more information?

Scan the QR code below to find out more about Defence's PFAS Investigation and Management program at Swartz Barracks or visit:

[www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/swartz-barracks](http://www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/pfas/pfas-management-sites/swartz-barracks)



## Alternatively, you can contact:



1800 333 362



[pfas.enquiry@defence.gov.au](mailto:pfas.enquiry@defence.gov.au)

## Health enquiries

Health related enquiries should be directed to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing on 1800 941 180 or email:

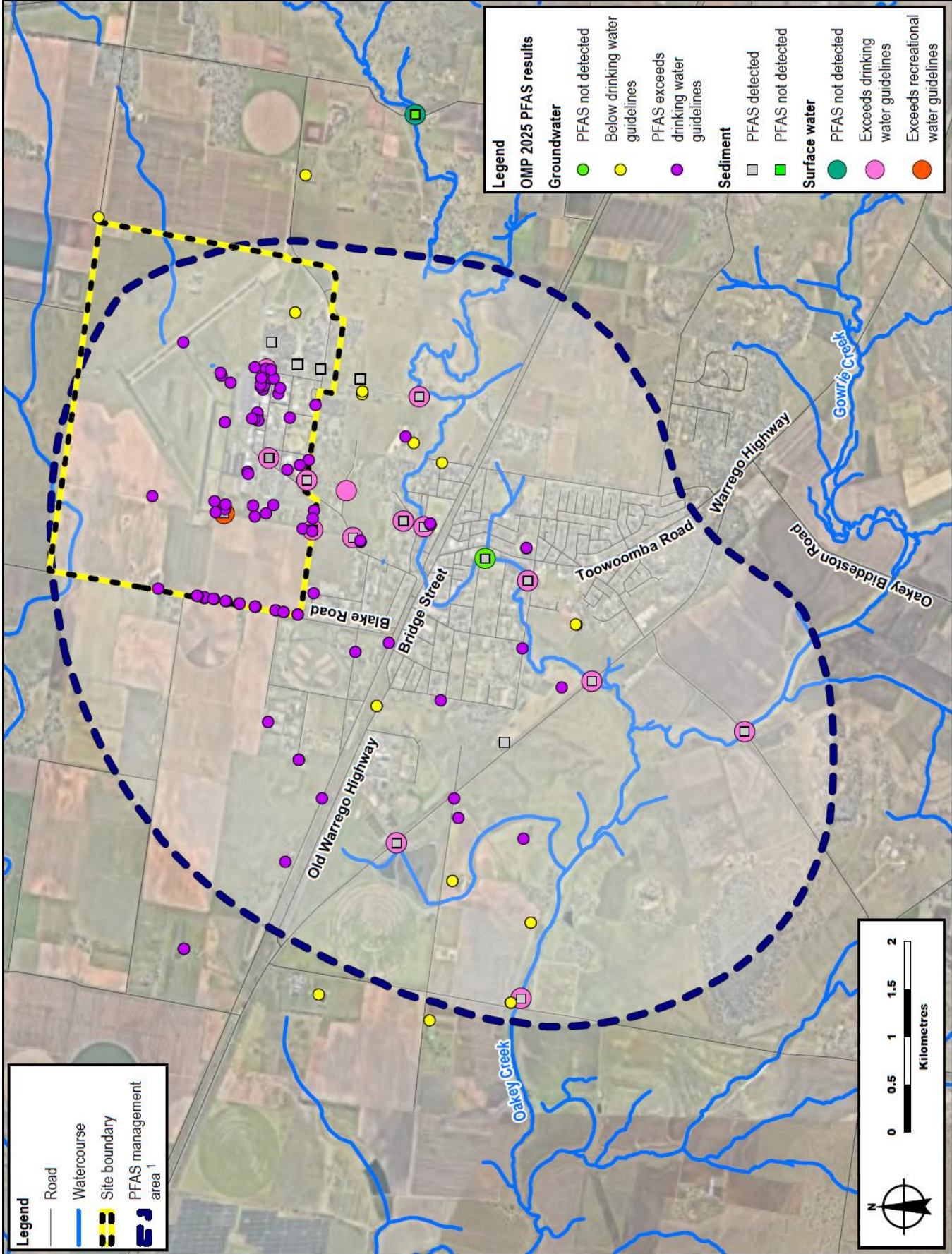
[health.pfas@health.gov.au](mailto:health.pfas@health.gov.au)

## Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

For translation assistance, TIS National provides interpreting services 24 hours a day via telephone anywhere in Australia. For more information contact 131 450 or visit:

[www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

All website links and contact details in this factsheet were correct at the time of publication but may change over time. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to [www.defence.gov.au/pfas](http://www.defence.gov.au/pfas)



\*The term 'PFAS management area' refers to the combined area of Swartz Barracks and the Oakley Management Area as defined in the PFAS management area plan.

## Swartz Barracks 2025 Ongoing Monitoring Results

