



# HMAS Stirling PFAS Investigation Community Newsletter

## PFAS Investigation and Management Program

### Background

In March 2017, the Department of Defence (Defence) engaged an independent environmental consultant, RPS Group, to undertake a detailed investigation into per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of HMAS Stirling (the Base). The Base has a history of using legacy firefighting foams for emergency firefighting situations and firefighting training. In 2004, Defence commenced phasing out its use of legacy firefighting foam containing specific types of PFAS, perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) as active ingredients. The firefighting foam now used by Defence is a more environmentally safe product.

### Investigation update

*The objective of the detailed environmental investigation is to identify the nature and extent of PFAS in the environment from legacy firefighting foam used at the Base, and to understand any potential exposure risks to people or the environment. Understanding these potential risks will assist in developing mitigation strategies to minimise exposure.*

The detailed environmental investigation is being undertaken in accordance with the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999 (NEPM).

The NEPM process includes:

- Preliminary Site Investigation
- Detailed Site Investigation
- If required, a Human Health Risk Assessment and or Ecological Risk Assessment.

The investigation is focused on understanding the extent of contamination in surface water, groundwater and soils and how that relates to human and environmental exposure. Based on the initial investigation findings it was determined that an Ecological Risk Assessment should be conducted. However, it was determined that a Human Health Risk Assessment was not required.

Defence has completed the drilling of monitoring bores on and off base; collected soil, sediment, surface water, groundwater and porewater samples for laboratory analysis; has completed six groundwater monitoring events; and has commenced sampling for the Ecological Risk Assessment.

To date approximately 750 samples have been collected from across the Island, and analysed for PFAS content. A further estimated 300 samples are proposed for collection and analysis to support the Ecological Risk Assessment expected to be completed by the end of June 2018.



### What is happening now?

The detailed environmental investigation will determine the full nature and extent of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, HMAS Stirling, Garden Island. The Investigation follows a three-staged process:





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#### Extent of Sampling to Date

Sampling and testing completed to date has included:

- groundwater sampling on-base and around the Island
- soil sampling on-base and around the Island
- surface water sampling from the near shore marine environment
- sediment and porewater sampling from the near shore marine environment

#### Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA)

Initial review of the data returned from the DSI sampling program has indicated that there is no PFAS exposure risk to humans presented by the residual impact identified within soils and groundwater as a result of historic foam use on the Island. Further work is required to assess the potential ecological risk presented by the PFAS identified in the soils and groundwater. This work will take the form of an ERA. Sampling for the ERA will comprise the collection of sandworms and filter feeders (e.g. mussels etc.) as well as seagrass and sea lettuce and analysis for PFAS content. Should PFAS be detected within these samples consideration will be given to collection of samples from fish and other higher order animals.

#### Keeping the community informed

Defence is committed to regularly updating the community throughout the investigation. As well as community information sessions, updates are provided through the project website, direct mail and information sheets as new information becomes available. The next community information session is expected to be held in late April 2018.



#### PFAS Project Team:

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#### Commonwealth Department of Health:

Defence recognises that it is not an authority on public health. For Commonwealth Department of Health information on PFAS health guidance:

Visit: [www.health.gov.au/pfas](http://www.health.gov.au/pfas)

Department of Health PFAS hotline: 1800 941 180

