



Williamstown PFAS Investigation - update

Information for local residents and businesses

The investigation into PFAS contamination in the area surrounding at the RAAF Base Williamstown is now complete, and the NSW Government is in a position to provide long-term advice to the community to reduce potential exposure to PFAS. This follows a review of the Department of Defence's draft Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) by the Williamstown Expert Panel, led by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer Professor Mary O'Kane AC. The review of the latest data has resulted in some changes.

What is the Human Health Risk Assessment?

The draft Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) examines possible pathways for human health exposure to PFAS arising from contamination at the Williamstown RAAF Base. This includes possible exposure through ground, surface and bore water through activities such as drinking and swimming, and through consumption of food such as home-slaughtered meat, poultry, eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables.

This report was undertaken after the NSW Government requested further, detailed studies to fill data gaps.

The Department of Defence recently provided the NSW Government with a draft Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) and Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) after we requested they undertake further, detailed studies to identify data gaps.

The Williamstown Expert Panel, led by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer Professor Mary O'Kane AC, has completed a review of the latest data which has resulted in some changes.

Is the Investigation Area changing?

Yes. The boundaries of the Investigation Area, now known as the Management Area, will comprise three zones. This has seen a reduction in some areas and an expansion in other areas including Fullerton Cove and additional parts of Salt Ash.

There is now a Primary Management Zone, Secondary Management Zone and Broader Management Zone. Each zone has tailored precautionary advice for residents to minimise

exposure to PFAS originating from the RAAF Base Williamstown.

The Primary Management Zone has significantly higher levels of PFAS detected and therefore, the strongest advice applies.

The zones have been mapped and can be viewed on the EPA website

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamstown.htm.

Is the precautionary advice changing?

Yes. Although the precautionary advice in place since 2015 remains largely unchanged, it is tailored for residents depending on location. The advice continues to be precautionary in nature because the effects of PFAS are still unclear.

Importantly, reticulated water (often referred to as town water) is safe to drink across all zones.

What is the advice for people living in the Primary Management Zone?

- It is SAFE to drink water from the reticulated supply (town water)
- Groundwater, bore water and surface water should NOT be used for ANY PURPOSE
- Additionally, DO NOT do anything with groundwater, bore water or surface water (including in creeks and drains) that might lead to incidental ingestion (swallowing)
- Home grown foods produced in this zone should NOT be consumed. This includes home-slaughtered meat, poultry, eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables should NOT be consumed
- The existing dietary advice for fish and seafood remains appropriate.

What is the advice for people living in Secondary and Broader Management Zones?

- It is SAFE to drink water from the reticulated supply (town water).
- Do NOT use groundwater, bore water or surface water for drinking or cooking
- AVOID swallowing groundwater or surface water when bathing, showering, swimming and paddling (including in creeks and drains). Groundwater and surface water should NOT be used for swimming or paddling pools
- AVOID eating home grown food produced in this zone – including home-slaughtered meat, eggs, milk, poultry, fruit and vegetables
- The existing dietary advice for fish and seafood remains appropriate.

Why is there a distinction between the Secondary and Broader Management Zone?

The Secondary Management Zone has some detected levels of PFAS. The topography and hydrology of the Broader Management Zone means PFAS detections could occur now and into the future.

What does this mean for residents and local businesses?

Following your tailored advice is recommended to reduce your potential exposure to PFAS.

Are my pets safe?

There are no proven adverse effects on animals from drinking water that may have been exposed to PFAS. If you would like to minimise your pet's exposure, it is recommended that you use an alternative water supply, other than ground, surface or bore water for drinking. This is also advised when washing your animals to reduce the risk of them swallowing water during the process.

Can I sell any produce produced there to market?

Yes. There is no domestic or international limits for PFAS in food, nor any restrictions on sale or movement of primary produce. In Australia, the general community's exposure to PFAS is low and declining as most people source their food from a wide variety of types

and locations and any PFAS levels that may be present in one source are diluted.

People living in affected areas are being advised to minimise their exposure. This is because people living in these areas are exposed to higher levels of PFAS and may be regular consumers of these products from this location.

What will happen next?

It is the NSW Government's understanding that Defence will release the final reports in the coming weeks, and will undertake their own community engagement.

As the investigation phase is now complete, the NSW Government expects the Department of Defence will shift their focus to long term monitoring and consolidate remediation and management efforts for the contaminated land.

The NSW Government will continue to support the Williamstown Community and promoting the tailored advice. In the longer term, the NSW EPA will review the groundwater sampling periodically and update advice accordingly.

Where can I find more information?

The tailored advice and latest information will be available on the EPA's website at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamstown.htm

You can also book a one-on-one discussion with an EPA Officer by filling out the form at this page, or calling the Environment Line on **131 555**.