



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:

