



9 August 2016

Dear Resident

Investigation Update: PFAS Contamination, Williamtown

I am writing to update you on recent developments regarding the chemical contamination issues in and around the RAAF Base at Williamtown.

On 8 August 2016, the Department of Defence released its Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) and Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) reports. The NSW Government has completed an initial review of these two reports, which confirm that the precautionary advice, fishing closures and investigation area identified in October 2015, will remain in place.

In addition to the existing advice about avoiding exposure pathways the NSW Government is now recommending residents moderate their consumption of home grown fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry, and avoid the incidental swallowing of groundwater, particularly by children, when showering, bathing and swimming. This is particularly so in areas identified in the ESA of higher per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) groundwater contamination. **The attachment** to this letter outlines this advice.

Whilst there is no consistent or conclusive evidence of detrimental health effects for humans from PFAS, the EPA and NSW Government recommend you follow the precautionary advice to minimise your exposure to contamination.

We understand you may have many questions and I acknowledge that the communities around the Base have been very concerned since they became aware of the contamination. We know many people have also been frustrated by the length of time the investigations are taking.

While the HHRA provides us with a great deal of new data, there are still some areas where we need to know more. Last Friday I wrote to Defence outlining where data gaps in the HHRA have been identified. We have requested additional testing be undertaken so conclusive advice about the long term exposure and health risks from PFAS can be provided. We have also asked for further information on what actions Defence are planning for containment and remediation. Defence have agreed in principle to our requests for further information and we are awaiting their official advice.

In addition, a further review of the NSW Government's precautionary advice will be undertaken once the Federal Department of Health's EnHealth guidelines has been completed at the end of August 2016.

We intend to provide you with further clarity around the next steps in the coming weeks.

Williamtown differs from most other contaminated sites in NSW in that the EPA has no regulatory powers over Defence and therefore no power to direct actions and response times. However, the EPA will continue to relay the NSW Government's and community's expectation that Defence appropriately manage the contamination and its consequences, and progress containment and remediation options.

I encourage you to attend the Community drop-in session at **Salt Ash Community Hall, Wednesday 10 August, from 12:30pm to 6:30pm**, where representatives from a range of Government agencies, including the EPA, NSW Health, Hunter Water and Department of Primary Industries will be available to discuss the HHRA review with you.



If you are feeling any anxiety about the contamination, please contact our dedicated support line on 0417 494 576 between 8am-4pm Monday to Friday, or 1800 011 511 after hours.

If you are unable to attend the community drop-in and have questions, you can go to our website www.epa.nsw.gov.au/mediaInformation/williamtown.htm, call our environment line **131 555** or call the local health unit on **1300 066 055**.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B.P. Buffier'.

Barry Buffier
Chair and CEO
NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

Precautionary advice for people living in the Williamtown area

PFAS (per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances) are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used as fire retardants since the 1950s in a range of common household products and specialty applications, including in the manufacture of non-stick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging; some industrial processes; and in some types of fire-fighting foam.

The NSW Government is recommending that residents from the Williamtown community follow precautionary advice to minimise their exposure to PFAS chemicals originating from the Williamtown RAAF Base.

Dietary advice	Health/behavioural advice
<p>Water consumption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Town water ✗ Do not use groundwater, bore water or surface water for drinking or cooking <p>Home grown produce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Do not eat eggs or drink milk produced in the advisory area - Moderate consumption of fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry produced in the advisory area while further work and analysis is undertaken – particularly in areas of higher PFAS contamination <p>Seafood and fish produce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Commercially harvested oysters ✗ Do not eat fish, prawns or <i>wild</i> oysters caught in the investigation area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Skin contact with groundwater, surface water, soils, muds and sediments ✓ Breathing in dust from soil ✓ Using rainwater from roofs for drinking, cooking and watering ✗ Avoid swallowing groundwater or surface water when bathing, showering, swimming and paddling ✗ Fishing closures remain in place