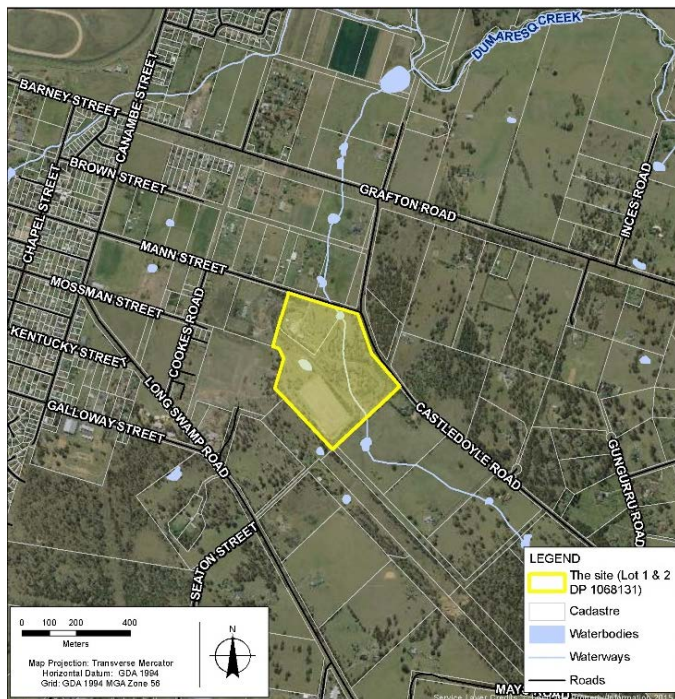


Armidale – Program Update Factsheet

Background to the project

In 2016 FRNSW engaged GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) to undertake an environmental investigation into the presence of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on FRNSW’s Armidale training site. The investigation is part of a review of several FRNSW sites across NSW where legacy firefighting foams containing PFAS have been stored, used and disposed of.



FRNSW Armidale Training Site (shaded in yellow), Dumaresq Creek (outlined in blue), and surrounding community

PFAS are emerging contaminants, which means that any ecological and human health effects are unclear. FRNSW is investigating to better understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination across its sites and assess potential risks to human health or ecology, including the identification of pathways through which people may be exposed to these chemicals.

Previous Investigations

Environmental sampling was undertaken by the NSW EPA in December 2016, and involved

collecting surface water, sediment, soil and groundwater samples from the Armidale training site. PFAS was detected onsite, during this program.

FRNSW subsequently conducted a Preliminary Site Investigation into the presence of PFAS at the Armidale training site in February 2017, and PFAS was identified in the samples collected.

The EPA requested that a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) be conducted, to determine the extent of the PFAS contamination at the site and in the surrounding area.

A DSI was completed in May 2017. Surface water, sediment, soil, and groundwater samples were collected on the training site and on nearby properties.

FRNSW distributed a water use survey at this time, to help identify if and how local residents used groundwater or surface water, to identify any potential pathways where people may be exposed.

Project update – February 2018

A report detailing the results of this DSI has been reviewed by the EPA and published on FRNSW’s website.

The report and information on local residents’ water use is now with the NSW PFAS Taskforce for review, to determine if any precautionary advice is needed to help landholders minimise their contact with these chemicals.

Any precautionary advice given by the EPA will be tailored to each individual landholder based on their specific water use. If the provision of precautionary advice is required, landowners will be contacted directly by the EPA.

The advice will not apply to everyone in the community.

Management of information collected from the property

Information obtained by FRNSW during the sampling programs, including those results taken from residential properties, is being used as part of the broader project scope to understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination in the area surrounding the site. We will also use this information when we engage with local and state authorities, as well as the local community. The information will help to identify what management action, if any, may be needed.

Reports of the investigations will be published on the project website www.fire.nsw.gov.au/pfas. The names and addresses of property owners will not be included in the report.

PFAS and firefighting foam

PFAS are a class of manufactured chemicals that were used in aqueous film forming foam (referred to as AFFF). They were used extensively worldwide from the 1970s due to their effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires.

The firefighting foams (AFFF) now used by FRNSW are more environmentally sensitive and do not contain PFAS.

Guidance values

The Commonwealth Department of Health has calculated drinking water quality and recreational water quality values for use in site investigations in Australia. These values are based on the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) health based guidance values for PFOS and PFOA, which are in the form of a tolerable daily intake. A tolerable daily intake is a level of daily oral exposure over a lifetime that is considered to be without significant health risk for humans.

Further information on health-based guidance values for PFAS can be found on the Department of Health's website (included at the end of this factsheet).

Health

Most people living in developed nations are likely to have some levels of PFAS in their body because these compounds have been used in domestic products like non-stick cookware, fire retardant fabrics including carpet, and furniture.

FRNSW is following the guidance of the Department of Health on PFAS, which states that currently there is no consistent evidence that exposure to these PFAS causes adverse human health effects. Current guidance values are a precautionary measure while further research is conducted into potential health effects of PFAS.

Further information

Further information about the FRNSW PFAS Investigation can be found on our website at www.fire.nsw.gov.au/pfas.

Information on PFAS and the PFAS investigation program being undertaken by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) can be found on the EPA website at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Mediainformation/pfasinvestigation.htm.

Information on PFAS health effects and exposure pathways can be found on the Department of Health's website at www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas-hbgv.htm

Contact the Project Team



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