

# Jervis Bay Range Facility and HMAS Creswell: PFAS Investigations

## Update for local residents

### Key points

- The Department of Defence is investigating potential per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination stemming from the historical use of liquid fire-fighting foams at Jervis Bay Range Facility (JBRF) and HMAS Creswell.
- Investigations have found PFAS in surface and groundwater. Further information on the Department of Defence's investigation can be found at <http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/JervisBay/>
- The Federal Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities has issued precautionary dietary advice for the residents of the Jervis Bay Territory. This does not apply to the wider community or visitors to the area. [https://regional.gov.au/territories/jervis\\_bay/community/bulletins/bulletins-2018/bulletin-2018-12.aspx](https://regional.gov.au/territories/jervis_bay/community/bulletins/bulletins-2018/bulletin-2018-12.aspx)
- The NSW PFAS Taskforce has determined no precautionary dietary advice is required at this time for the consumption of seafood from Jervis, Summercloud and Wreck Bays, within NSW waters.

### What are PFAS?

PFAS are a group of manufactured chemicals that include perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS).

Due to their fire retardant, waterproofing and stain resistant qualities, these chemicals were widely

used in some types of fire-fighting foam and other industrial products worldwide. PFAS can also be found in low concentrations in many consumer products like food packaging, non-stick cookware, fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications, clothing and shampoo.

The most common and prevalent sources of PFAS in the environment is where liquid fire-fighting foams were used for training purposes, particularly at airports, Department of Defence bases and fire-fighting training facilities.

PFAS are very stable chemicals that do not easily break down and can persist in the environment.

Products containing PFAS are being phased out around the world.

### Are PFAS a health risk?

The Australian Government's PFAS Expert Health Panel, in its report to the Federal Minister for Health, noted there is no current evidence to suggest an increase in overall health risk related to PFAS exposure. However, the Expert Panel also said health effects cannot be ruled out at this time.

Because the risks are not fully known, the NSW Government takes a precautionary approach to limiting people's exposure to PFAS. This includes occasionally providing precautionary advice to help limit people's exposure to PFAS. The EPA is leading the PFAS Investigation Program to understand the prevalence of this emerging contaminant in NSW. This program will help NSW be better prepared to respond if any health and environmental impacts become known.

The Expert Panel's report and a factsheet providing more information on PFAS and human health is available at [www.health.gov.au/pfas](http://www.health.gov.au/pfas).

### Why is testing being undertaken at JBRF and HMAS Creswell?

The Department of Defence is conducting PFAS investigations at locations across Australia where there has been significant historical use of PFAS containing fire-fighting foams. These investigations are looking at the extent of the impact of PFAS, and the potential risks to the community.

PFAS foams were used at JBRF and HMAS Creswell in fire-fighting training and operations prior to the foams being phased out of routine use.

## Who is managing the investigations in and around Jervis Bay?

JBRF and HMAS Creswell are in the Jervis Bay Territory and under the administration of the Department of Defence.

The Federal Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities has overall responsibility for the Jervis Bay Territory.

The NSW Government is responsible for the waters of Jervis Bay, Wreck Bay and Summercloud Bay below the high tide mark.

## What is known so far?

Investigations have found PFAS in surface water, groundwater and biota taken from Summercloud, Mary and Flatrock Creeks and Captains Lagoon.

The detection of PFAS is not unexpected given the past use of PFAS-containing liquid fire-fighting foam at the site. PFAS has also been used in many domestic and industrial products and background levels may be present from these other sources.

## Do residents need to do anything?

Finding PFAS in the environment does not mean there is a human health risk. It is important to assess if there are exposure pathways through which people might ingest PFAS, such as drinking contaminated ground water or consuming food products watered with contaminated ground water.

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities has issued precautionary dietary advice for residents of the Jervis Bay Territory. This advice is specific for residents who fish in Mary's Creek, Summercloud Creek, Captain's Lagoon and Flatrock Creek. This does not apply to the wider community or visitors to the area.

Regardless of PFAS detections, NSW Health recommends that people do not use groundwater for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene (including cleaning teeth and bathing) without testing and appropriate treatment.

## Can I still eat the seafood from Jervis Bay?

The NSW PFAS Taskforce has determined no precautionary dietary advice is required at this time for the consumption of seafood from Jervis, Summercloud and Wreck Bays, within NSW waters.

The EPA is encouraging community members to note general advice from Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) that people can safely

consume 2-3 serves of seafood a week, from a variety of sources and species.

## What are the next steps?

The Department of Defence and the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities continues its investigation into whether there are any potential impacts for the local community.

## What is the NSW Government's role?

Although the NSW Government does not regulate Department of Defence sites, they have agreed to conduct investigations in a manner consistent with regulatory requirements.

The NSW Government is committed to working with the Department of Defence to ensure timely and robust investigations are undertaken.

This collaboration ensures an appropriate, scientific and risk-based approach to protect the environment and community.

## Where can I find more information?

More information, including detailed investigation reports, can be found on the Department of Defence website at

<http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/>

More information on the NSW Government's response to PFAS can be found at

[www.epa.nsw.gov.au/pfas](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/pfas).

If you have any questions or concerns, call the 24/7 NSW Environment Line on **131 555**