



Australian Government
Defence

EC25-002801

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Committee Chair
NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on PFAS Contamination
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

pfas@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Faehrmann,

PFAS CONTAMINATION AT WAGGA WAGGA, NSW

Thank you for your letter of 22 April 2025 requesting an update on Defence's response to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination leaving RAAF Base Wagga and Blamey Barracks, and the security of Wagga Wagga's drinking water supply.

Defence has been working with NSW Government agencies, Wagga Wagga City Council and Riverina Water County Council since commencing environmental investigations into PFAS contamination at RAAF Base Wagga in 2017.

Defence has committed to the Riverina Water County Council and to the Wagga Wagga community that we will ensure the integrity of the Wagga Wagga water supply to the extent that it is impacted by PFAS from Defence bases.

PFAS has migrated from RAAF Base Wagga via stormwater through the base and Wagga Wagga City Council stormwater networks to the Gumly Gumly Wetland and in the sewage networks to the Forest Hill Sewage Treatment Plant.

In 2021, Defence removed approximately 1500 tonnes of PFAS-impacted soil from the taxiway extension at Wagga Wagga Airport. At RAAF Base Wagga, Defence is currently in the final stages of remediating PFAS-impacted infrastructure including the former fire extinguisher training pad and nearby areas. These works are expected to be complete by June 2025 and will help to minimise the amount of PFAS leaving the base to the Gumly Gumly Wetland.

The Gumly Gumly Wetland is now considered a secondary PFAS source. PFAS from the wetland is migrating towards the Riverina Water East Wagga borefield.

The hydrogeology of the region is complex. In 2019, Defence conducted a remediation options assessment for remediation of the Gumly Gumly Wetland, and for the installation of hydraulic controls to reduce the risk of PFAS movement to water supply bores. This assessment found that these measures would not be viable.

Extensive monitoring by Defence found that the PFAS plume continues to migrate towards the East Wagga borefield and that the PFAS plume is more extensive and diffuse than originally assessed. If Riverina Water need to access the East Wagga borefield when it is impacted by PFAS, the remediation will likely involve treating the impacted water at the point of extraction.

Defence continues to monitor PFAS in groundwater, surface water and the Riverina Water supply bores through an Ongoing Monitoring Plan. Reports from this monitoring are shared with relevant NSW Government agencies, Riverina Water, Wagga Wagga City Council and the Wagga Wagga community. Defence also participates in a Project Governance Group led by the NSW Government to review PFAS risks to the water supply and undertake contingency planning.

Should you wish to discuss any items raised in this letter, Defence's ongoing point of contact is Ms Kate Leane, Assistant Secretary PFAS Investigation and Management Program, at

Yours sincerely,

Pat Sowry
First Assistant Secretary - Infrastructure Division
Security and Estate Group

5 May 2025