



Australian Government

Defence

Senate Select Committee on PFAS (Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances)

Department of Defence Supplementary Submission

June 2025

PFAS contamination on and from RAAF Base Wagga is managed by Defence as part of its national PFAS Investigation and Management Program.

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

Defence has committed to the Riverina Water 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 sewerage networks to the Forest Hill Sewage Treatment Plant.

In 2021, Defence removed approximately 1,500 tonnes of PFAS-impacted soil from the taxiway extension at Wagga Wagga Airport. At RAAF Base Wagga, Defence has completed remediation of PFAS-impacted areas, including the former fire extinguisher training pad and nearby areas. These works will help to minimise the amount of PFAS leaving the base to the Gumly Gumly Wetland. The Gumly Gumly Wetland is a secondary PFAS source. PFAS from the wetland is migrating towards the Riverina Water East Wagga 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.

In 2023, Defence detected low levels of PFAS at two groundwater monitoring wells approximately 650 metres south-south-east from the East Wagga Wagga borefield. These monitoring wells do not form part of Riverina Water's drinking water supply and the PFAS levels were below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines released in 2018. Subsequent extensive investigation by Defence has confirmed there are no PFAS in the East Wagga Wagga borefield. While these results suggest the PFAS plume from RAAF Base Wagga is more extensive and diffuse than originally predicted, the ongoing monitoring results confirm there is no current threat to Wagga Wagga's water supply from PFAS contamination leaving RAAF Base Wagga.

Defence continues to monitor PFAS in groundwater, surface water and the Riverina Water supply bores through our Ongoing Monitoring Program. 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.