Committee Question Number: 55
Departmental Question Number: SQ18-000075

Program: n/a
Division/Agency: Airservices Australia
Topic: Water into Rapid Creek
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Senator Malarndirri McCarthy asked:

1. There have been media reports of millions of litres of water being fed into storm water drains in Rapid Creek in Darwin. Can you confirm this?
2. Who authorised Airservices Australia rescue trucks to dump PFAS contaminated water into a storm water drain that feeds into Rapid Creek?
3. How often are the trucks offloading PFAS contaminated water into the storm water drain that feeds into Rapid Creek?

Answer:

1-3.   Consistent with Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (Part 139.H, Section 24.1 and 8.1.1.4) relating to the provision of Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting Services (ARFFS), Airservices conducts daily checks on all of its fire fighting vehicles at Darwin to ensure they are fully operational to protect the travelling public.

These checks involve discharging water through each outlet which is then captured by storm water drains. If there is any fire fighting foam found in the system during these checks, the vehicle is immediately taken to a bunded training ground for flushing where all waste water is captured and disposed of by a licensed contractor. This water is not released to the storm water drains.

The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities is examining, under the Airports Act 1996, allegations related to environmental contamination by PFAS and other contaminants at Darwin Airport, which is a joint civil and military airport. The Department is consulting with Darwin Airport, the Department of Defence and the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority on this matter. Airservices is providing all relevant information to the Department to assist with its inquiry.