

EXPERT HEALTH PANEL FOR PFAS – PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

PFAS chemicals

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) used in fire-fighting foams on Defence bases, civilian airports and firefighting training grounds have migrated through the groundwater into adjoining areas.

These chemicals can persist in humans, animals and the environment. In particular they appear to accumulate in humans and are then very slowly eliminated from the body. The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) currently advises that ‘there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) causes adverse human health effects’ (enHealth, 2016); and recent reviews conducted by regulatory bodies have concluded that there is no compelling evidence that PFAS at the concentrations found in these areas are harmful to health. However, as a precaution it is generally recommended that exposure be minimised wherever possible.

Investigation of health effects and research priorities

To further investigate the potential health effects of PFAS, the Australian Government has set aside funds to do further research into the potential health effects of PFAS exposure.

The Expert Health Panel for PFAS (the Panel) has been established to provide updated and independent advice to the Australian Government on the potential health impacts associated with PFAS exposure and identify priority areas for further research. Allen + Clarke is an independent organisation that is assisting the Panel with this work.

To provide its advice to Government, the Panel is reviewing the current health and other scientific evidence available in addition to seeking the views of the public who are concerned by PFAS contamination. To do this, the Panel, assisted by Allen + Clarke, is currently undertaking a public consultation process.

This document

This document poses questions to the public to help the Panel to better understand the range of public views on the potential health impacts of PFAS contamination and what the focus of future research should be. It poses the same questions as the online survey that can be found at www.allenandclarke.com/PFAS.

You don’t have to answer all of the questions if you don’t want to. The questionnaire should take you about 20 minutes and there is an opportunity to provide extra comments at the end. It may take longer than this depending on the length of written responses to questions.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Web

Complete the survey online at www.allenandclarke.com/PFAS

Email

Email your completed responses to PFAS@allenandclarke.com

Post

Send your completed survey to:

Expert Health Panel for PFAS
MDP 5
Department of Health
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601

Please ensure your responses are returned by 11:59pm on **19 November 2017**.

HOW WILL YOUR RESPONSES BE MANAGED?

Your responses will be used to collate a report that analyses the submissions to identify the key themes, areas of concern and areas of focus for future research. *Allen + Clarke* is collecting the consultation information into a report, which will be provided to the Panel to help inform their advice to the Australian Government. Once completed, a short summary report explaining the findings will be made available at the Department of Health website.

Your response is voluntary. Information you provide will be held by Allen + Clarke but anonymised individual responses may be made available to the Panel. Personal information will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy and information law

There will be an opportunity for you to provide additional comments or concerns that you would like the Panel to consider at the end of this questionnaire.

GENERAL

Are you making a submission as:

- An individual
- On behalf of a group/organisation
- Other (please specify):

If you are making a submission on behalf of a group/organisation, please provide the name of the group/organisation and your position in that group or organisation:

Please indicate which sector best represents you:

- Individual/family
- Academic/research
- Non-government association
- Medical/public health professional
- Local/State government
- National government
- Commercial fishery/farmer
- Other (please specify):

Sex:

- Female
- Male
- X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified)
- Prefer not to say

Age:

- Under 25
- 25 - 44
- 45 - 64
- 65 - 84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say

EXPOSURE

1. Why is PFAS exposure of interest to you? (Check as many that apply)

- Currently living in an area being investigated for PFAS contamination in Australia
- Previously lived in an area being investigated for PFAS contamination in Australia
- Frequently visiting an area being investigated for PFAS contamination in Australia (e.g. for work or family)
- Consumption of food/water originating from an area being investigated for PFAS contamination in Australia
- Concerned about PFAS but not living in an area being investigated for PFAS contamination in Australia
- Have experienced occupational exposure to PFAS (e.g. working or training as a firefighter)
- Other: please specify.....

2. What sources of potential exposure to PFAS concern you the most? Please rank in order of what concerns you most: from 1 (most concern) to 10 (least concern).

Exposure	Ranking (1 – 10)
Drinking water	
Shower/bathing water	
Swimming pools or while swimming in rivers and watering holes	
Commercially purchased produce (fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, dairy products or seafood)	
Home grown produce (fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, dairy products or seafood)	
Contaminated air	
Contaminated soil	
Working in an industry using PFAS chemicals	
Skin contact with PFAS containing products	
Past exposure to PFAS	

Is there a potential source of exposure to PFAS not listed in the table that you are more concerned about?

CONCERNS ABOUT HEALTH IMPACTS

3. How concerned are you that you about the following? Please use the scale below ranging from 1 (not at all concerned) to 5 (very concerned).

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	Not at all concerned	Not concerned	Neutral	Concerned	Very concerned	
That you or your family's health <u>has</u> <u>already been affected</u> by PFAS?	<input type="radio"/>					
That you or your family's <u>future health</u> might be affected by PFAS?	<input type="radio"/>					
<u>About avoiding</u> exposure to PFAS?	<input type="radio"/>					
That you or your family's health is being <u>indirectly affected</u> by living in a PFAS Investigation area (e.g. stress and anxiety due to financial impacts, publicity or media attention?)	<input type="radio"/>					

4. If you are concerned about exposure to PFAS, what potential impacts on human health from PFAS exposure are you concerned about?

INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

5. How informed do you feel on the following topics? Please use the scale below ranging from 1 (not at all informed) to 5 (very informed).

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	Not at all informed	Not informed	Neutral	Informed	Very informed	
Levels of exposure to PFAS in specific communities	<input type="radio"/>					
Research on the effects of PFAS exposure	<input type="radio"/>					
Different ways people and communities may be exposed to PFAS	<input type="radio"/>					
The Government's response to address the health concerns of communities exposed to PFAS	<input type="radio"/>					

FUTURE HEALTH IMPACT AND EXPOSURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

6. How important is it that the Australian Government undertakes more research to understand the long-term health impacts of exposure to PFAS?

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely important

7. Do you have a preference for research on preventing further PFAS contamination, or for methods to monitor and treat already exposed communities?

- Preventing more PFAS contamination
- Monitoring and treating existing PFAS contamination
- Both are important to me
- Neither are important to me

8. What areas of human health research do you think should be prioritised?

Research area	Ranking (1 – 5)
The potential health effects on workers exposed to high levels of PFAS at work (occupational exposure)	
The potential health effects on communities that have experienced high exposure to PFAS due to contamination	
The potential health effects on communities that have experienced lower background exposure to PFAS chemicals	
The potential health effects of PFAS exposure on vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, babies, young children and the elderly	
The best methods to minimise exposure to PFAS in individuals and communities	

Is there an area of human health research not listed here that you would like to see prioritised for further research?



OTHER COMMENTS

9. Do you have any other comments or views on potential health impacts associated with PFAS exposure or priority areas for further research that you would like the Panel to consider?