

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade: Inquiry into the management of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination in and around Defence bases.

My submission relates to the Townsville RAAF base, Garbutt, and is in respect of terms of reference **a)** the extent of contamination in and around the base, including water, soil, other natural assets and built structures; and **f)** remediation works at the base.

Background:

As a long term resident of Garbutt, I have attended the public walk-in sessions, prior to and during the environmental assessment undertaken of the area outside the base by consultants WSP. This has been long overdue and came only after local pressure, following concerns raised by residents at Oakey and Williamstown.

a) the extent of contamination in and around the base, including water, soil, other natural assets and built structures.

The investigation confirmed that PFAS has travelled widely from the base, assisted by the seasonal pumping of water off base into the nearby lagoon, to keep the runway serviceable during heavy wet season events. (See attachments: map showing pump and wetlands, and wetland photos). Pumping removes not just freshwater, but groundwater reaching the surface with the rise in the water table. This is still the preferred option to keeping the runway open.

Though the use of PFAS foams in fight-fighting and training has been superseded, residues are still present in the soil, water and the food chain as evidenced in samples taken of flora, fish and crustaceans. I note that birds were not sampled, an important oversight given that birds are the most mobile of any fauna, including humans, and the feed off plants and/or species further down the food chain.

f) remediation works at the base.

Of further concern is the planned extension of the runway to accommodate larger military aircraft. Construction would need to be undertaken within the scope of any remedial works, to contain contaminated soil and loam on the RAAF base, to prevent spillage into the wider area. (See attachment: article in Tsv Bulletin).

\$33m airport works to deliver 150 jobs

PROJECT RUNWAY

RACHEL RILEY

A MAJOR runway extension at Townsville Airport will boost the city's Defence capabilities as well as create up to 150 jobs during construction.

The three-part project at RAAF Base Townsville includes a 407m runway extension, a redevelopment of two existing aprons and a new aircraft rinse facility. Construction was expected to

start in 2016 after parliamentary approval in 2015, but the *Bulletin* can reveal the airfield works are now scheduled to start late next year with completion expected by late 2020.

A Department of Defence spokeswoman said a construction contractor had not been appointed for the airfield works.

"The tender for a contractor to carry out the works is expected to be released

in either late 2018 or early 2019," she said. "It is anticipated between 100 and 150 workers will be employed and the majority of the works, including supply of materials, will be sourced from the local region."

The runway extension work has an estimated value of \$33.1 million.

The existing Townsville runway is 2438m long and 45m wide but will become about 2845m, with no change to

its width. The upgrade is needed to accommodate the military's new fleet of surveillance planes — the P-8A Poseidon — at maximum weight.

"While (RAAF) Base Townsville can accommodate a P-8A Poseidon, the base's present runway length is not sufficient to allow the aircraft to take off at its maximum weight," the Defence spokeswoman said.

CONTINUED Page 2

Airport runway extension project to deliver 150 jobs

FROM PAGE 1

"This limits the range and or payload that can be carried by the Poseidon when operating from Townsville," she said.

The Poseidon has already operated at RAAF Townsville for training activities, including when two of the aircraft were deployed for three weeks during Exercise Talisman Saber in July last year.

A Queensland Airports Limited spokeswoman said it supported the Federal Government's investment in aviation infrastructure but said the runway extension was not something the Townsville Airport required for its civilian aviation operations.

She also said it was not a



CAPABILITIES BOOST: The proposed airport runway extension, shown in pink, will accommodate the P-8A Poseidon (right). The new aprons are shown in green and the aircraft rinse is in yellow.



factor in whether Townsville could attract more international services or larger aircraft.

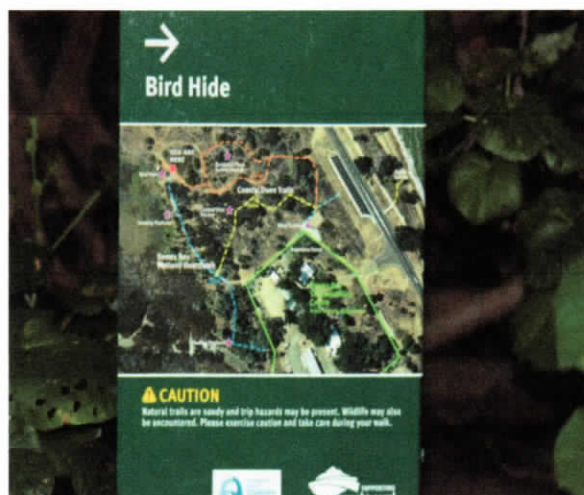
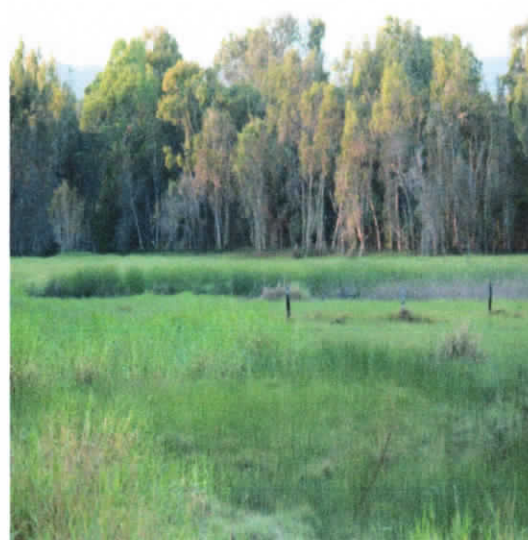
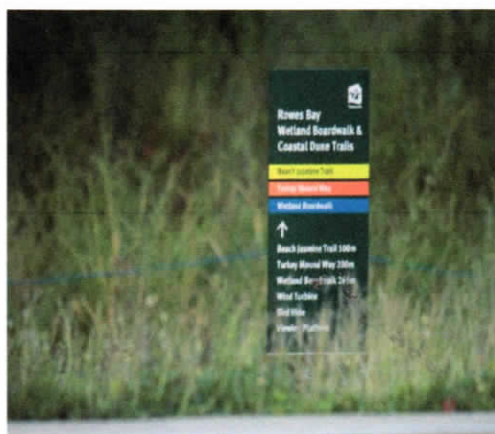
"Our dedicated business development and marketing department engage in regular

dialogue with airlines regarding new opportunities," the spokeswoman said.

"Investment in infrastructure is important for Townsville, regardless of whether that investment comes from

public or private sources. "The Defence facility in Townsville is a significant employer in the region, so it's great to see the Federal Government recognise this through funding to enhance operations."

The Defence contractor will be required to provide a detailed co-ordination plan for all construction activities on the airfield to minimise the impact to Defence and civilian operations.



map of area



Above: boardwalk



Right: proximity of lagoon boardwalk to retirement village



pump at end of runway

