

Committee Inquiries Question on Notice

Select Committee on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

IQ25-000099

Division/Agency: Agency - Airservices Australia

Hansard Reference: Written (25 June 2025)

Topic: PFAS remediation at Launceston Airport

Lidia Thorpe asked:

1. A submitter in Launceston, who owns property downstream of Kelly's Creek, has raised concern with the levels of PFAS in the creek. Despite this they stated that they were not able to participate in roundtable discussions for PFAS remediation at Launceston Airport.
 - a) Can you please explain why nearby property owners did not participate as part of the roundtable?
 - b) What consultation was done with property owners near the Airport before works commenced?
 - c) Have property owners contacted Airservices regarding evidence of PFAS contamination on their properties?
2. Please provide an update on the cost and progress of Launceston Airport Remediation works?
3. Please provide more detail on AECOM and Ternary Group's involvement with the remediation process at Launceston Airport—specifically a breakdown of responsibilities, including those of Airservices?
4. Please provide an update of the Airservices National PFAS Management Program? What is the status of each airport's program?
5. Submitters who operate airports around the country have expressed concern with the slow pace of Airservices National PFAS Management Program.
 - a) Could you please elaborate further as to why the speed of the program may differ between airports? How is this information conveyed to airport operators?
 - b) Has Airservices received feedback from airport operators regarding the management of the program?

Answer:

1.
 - a) Membership of the PFAS Roundtable at Launceston includes Airservices Australia, Australia Pacific Airports Launceston, the Airport Environment Officer and relevant State/Territory agencies. Specific off-airport property owners are not included in Roundtables. Roundtable members design and participate in engagement activities with off-airport property owners.

- b) Airservices has consulted the off-airport property owners at Kellys Creek. Airservices was granted access to collect samples on this property over several rounds of monitoring since 2021. In each instance, Airservices provided the results of this sampling to the property owner. In December 2023, Airservices engaged the Kellys Creek property owner in relation to a property-specific human health risk assessment. This risk assessment was reviewed by Tasmanian agencies prior to being provided to the property-owner. Future engagement is planned with off-airport property-owners at the completion and publication of the Airservices Detailed Site Investigation.
 - c) Airservices has routine contact with off-airport landowners including those who have granted permission to Airservices to conduct sampling on their property.
2. Practical Completion of the remediation works at the former fire training ground at Launceston was achieved on 30 June 2025. This milestone includes the completion of all remediation works as specified in the Remediation Action Plan developed for the site. Airservices' submission to the Public Works Committee included a whole-of-life cost for the proposed works of \$24 million (https://www.aph.gov.au/search/url/Inquiry/26895_74_). The works have been delivered within this budget and as specified in the Environmental Remediation Order.
 3. AECOM were engaged initially by Airservices on 24 February 2023 to develop the Remediation Action Plan (RAP) for the former fire training ground at Launceston. The RAP documents the scope of the remediation works, how the works are to be performed and how the effectiveness of the remediation is to be monitored. Ternary Group were engaged by Airservices on 6 June 2024 to build the enabling environment for the delivery of the main remediation works, this included all elements of site set up, pads, shed, and roadways. AECOM were subsequently engaged by Airservices on 19 December 2024 as the Remediation Contractor, ultimately responsible for delivering the remediation works as per the finalised RAP. AECOM in turn engaged the Ternary Group to provide the workforce and machinery to deliver the physical remediation scope. Airservices managed the contracts of AECOM and Ternary Group to ensure works were delivered as per the contract and the finalised RAP. The development of the RAP and the delivery of the works has been overseen by a qualified Contaminated Land Auditor from JBS&G acting as Independent Assessor as required under the Environmental Remediation Order issued to Airservices by the Airport Environment Officer. The Independent Assessor has a sign-off role at various 'hold points' during the works to provide surety that the works are conducted in accordance with the RAP and relevant national guidance.
 4. Consistent with Airservices' submission to the Select Committee in December 2024, Airservices' site characterisation and investigation phase is nearing completion. All planned Preliminary Site Investigations (PSIs) have been finalised and of 15 planned Targeted Site Investigations (TSIs), 9 have been finalised and a further six are currently in draft report and are awaiting finalisation. There are 12 Detailed Site Investigations (DSI), with 10 draft reports now complete and two still in progress. All site investigations are expected to be finalised before the end of 2025. All finalised investigations, TSI, DSI and PSI, are publicly released and can be accessed by location, on Airservices website (<https://engage.airservicesaustralia.com/hub-page/pfas>). Remediation planning is now also underway at Perth and Cairns, and is soon to commence at Hobart and Adelaide.

The RAP for the former fire training ground at Rockhampton has now also been finalised and is currently subject to a Public Works Committee Inquiry.

5. Airservices is a tenant at each of the airports where it provides critical services to the aviation industry. As a tenant (rather than a landowner) Airservices is dependent on various stakeholders including airport leasing companies and Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies for approvals prior to conducting investigation, management and/or remediation works. Securing agreement from these complex groups, who in some instances have different objectives, often adds to the timelines within which Airservices can act.
 - a) Airservices National PFAS Management Program uses national guidance including the National Environmental Protection Measure (Assessment of Site Contamination) 1999 and the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (PFAS NEMP) to guide its approach to investigations and management. These guidance documents include a systematic process to assess the presence of PFAS and to guide management responses. No two airport sites within Airservices' National PFAS Management Program are the same. Some sites are more complex with multiple discreet Airservices lease areas, each potentially with a different history of PFAS-containing aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) use. At some airports there have been multiple historic users of PFAS-containing AFFF. The intensity of investigation and pace at which investigation have been completed therefore differs between airports based on the results of the investigations. The site characterisation and investigation phase allows Airservices to sequence management and remediation responses in a risk-based and prioritised manner across all airports where impacts from Airservices' historic use of PFAS-containing AFFF remain.
 - b) Airservices convenes a Roundtable at all airports within Airservices' National PFAS Management Program. Airport leasing companies or operators are active participants in these Roundtables and provide ongoing feedback on the Program.