

HEN PFAS Information Night

Panelist:

Senator Mehreen Faruqi (MF), Greens Senator

Dr. Jason Reynolds (JR), Western Sydney University

Dr. Kate Hughes (KH), Right to Know Publications

Chris Birrer (CB), 1st Assistant Secretary of Infrastructure, Department of Defence

	Questions:	Answers collated from panel:	Follow Up Items:
1	Can each speaker answer whether they can say for certain that PFAS do not cause cancer?		
2	Can we get a copy or the link to the parliamentary inquiry Senator Faruqi mentioned?	Link provided	https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportjnt/024207/toc_pdf/inquiryintothemangementofPFAScontaminationinandaroundDefencebases.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf
3	Does PFAS contaminate food grown in the contaminated soil?	(CB) It varies. Root vegetables have low levels as do citrus trees. PFAS is more prevalent in green leafy vegetables.	
4	Does the PFAS contamination spill into the river	(CB) Yes via Rickaby's Creek and Cooley Creek	
5	Dr Jason Reynolds mentioned PFAS in the "hot zone" does that mean it's in the soil and surface and ground water?		
6	Have any farmers had to stop farming because of PFAS in Richmond? Some veggie farms seem to have closed.		
7	Hi Jason, How toxic is Fluoride? It's in our water, toothpaste and more. Is it killing us?	(JR) Fluoride is not harmful. It is very different to Fluroine which makes up PFAS. Fluroine is reactive and has a chance to impact genes. Fluoride is safe and has a negative charge which means it can't impact your genes.	

8	How can people know if the meat they buy has PFAS in it?	(CB) Mentioned Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) are currently conducting a "Australian Total Diet Study" but otherwise not sure.	http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/chemicals/Pages/Perfluorinated-compounds.aspx
9	How does the contamination in the Hawkesbury compare to other PFAS contaminated sites?	(MF) Williamtown has a massive impact in comparison to Richmond. Unfortunately, though, the more we look into PFAS contamination the more we find out, and there is much more work to be done. (CB) Department of Defence has 28 bases that are currently being investigated. Williamtown had more of an impact. The type of soil really dictates how PFAS spreads. Sandy soil for example lets it pass through more easily than clay soil. Other factors are whether or not PFAS is in the surface water vs. groundwater and how do local people interact with these waterways.	
10	I know the base has been left out of data... buuuut My children have been in care at the RAAF base for over 7 years. How will PFAS affect them?!	(CB) The key exposure is through ingesting PFAS- particularly through water. It is unlikely children have been drinking any water other than Sydney Water. (MF) Blood testing should be broadened to the Richmond and Richmond RAAF Base.	
11	Is the local drinking water contaminated?		
12	Jason, according to your research is PFAS or the cocaine in our water and soils a larger issue?		
13	Do you think people in the most contaminated areas will have trouble selling their properties?		
14	The Hawkesbury gets its town water from the Hawkesbury River at North Richmond. How much PFAS is being pumped to our homes?		
15	Who is ultimately responsible for informing residents if their properties are contaminated?		
16	Why do the reports from Defense refer to home grown meat when there are commercial beef properties in the pfas study area?	(CB) <i>The Human Health Risk Assessment</i> assumes you are not only eating the meat you raise. Consistency of exposure is low when you are buying meat from a Woolies or Coles for	

		example. Approx. 50 servings/month is means potential risk is high	
17	Why won't defense pay for blood testing of affected residents?	(CB) Department of Defence have paid for blood tests in Oakey, Williamtown and Katherine. This was part of a Department of Health study. (MF) Comparative studies exist overseas and they should be done here, as well. (Councillor Danielle Wheeler) The community is told PFAS is a risk and that we don't have data on it but we're also told not to worry. She urges us to find more data. Blood tests are a great way to collect this. PFAS needs an ongoing long term study.	
18	Will Defense apologize to the people who have elevated levels of pfas in their blood simply because Defense failed to inform them of the contamination.		
19	Is it ok to irrigate from the river downstream of the RAAF Base?	(JR) Near Windsor Bridge PFAS is undetectable	
20	If my eggs are contaminated it is ok to eat them?	(JR, CB) Department of Health are the appropriate department to give advice on this. PFAS can be found in eggs- in particular the yolk.	
21	How does PFAS contamination change the biodiversity of our local environment?	(JR) The University of Western Sydney is currently studying the microbiome of soil. PFAS can be found in the microbiome.	
22	Are there PFAS levels in urban areas in non RAAF base to compare our town to?	(CB) PFAS contamination has been studied in areas with unlined landfills. No comparative results had been drawn	
23	Shouldn't we have the right to know what's in our food? Why is PFAS not checked or labelled?	(CB) Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) are currently conducting a "Total Dietary Study" (MF) Yes, we should absolutely have the right to know what's in our food and we don't currently check for or label PFAS. This was recommended in the Parliamentary Inquiry into the management of PFAS contamination around RAAF bases.	http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/chemicals/Pages/Perfluorinated-compounds.aspx https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committee/s/reportint/024207/toc_pdf/inquiryintothemanagementofPFAScontaminationinandaroundDefencebases.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

24	The government hasn't taken onboard the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry- what can we do to bring awareness?	(MF) Raise this through local members and local groups (e.g. HEN)	http://robynpreston.com.au/contact-us-and-directions/ https://www.hen.org.au/contact-2/
25	How sensible is the advice that you can't consume the contaminated food yourself but you can sell it?	There's no regulation, although for water there is a standard.	