

My submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Works is based on the following: as a long-time resident of the adjacent suburb, I have always taken a keen interest in RAAF Base Garbutt, in particular the safety and environmental effects on the community. Most recently, I attended public meetings in relation to the accident release of PFAS into the local waterways, which has also penetrated groundwater drawn from local bores. Few would dispute the good work done by the RAAF and the urgent need to bring accommodation up to current standards. As no local resident is included in the "Key stakeholder" list I feel obliged to point out the following:

From the NQ Mid-term refresh program:

73. Potential Impacts

f. **Contamination Remediation:** The possibility exists that trenching for the proposed fire ring mains at HMAS Cairns and RAAF Base Townsville will disturb soils or groundwater with concentrations of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Before excavating, Defence will establish a Project PFAS management approach in accordance with the Defence PFAS framework and Base management plans. The purpose will be to identify actions in encounters and in management in re-use or disposal of PFAS contaminated excavated spoil under different contaminant concentrations.

Whilst the likelihood exists of encounters with some asbestos, pesticide and heavy metal contamination, sampling during design did not indicate the presence of such contamination that could represent a risk to human health or the environment.

Related Projects

75. RAAF Base Townsville. Related works are as follows:

a. **JOINT 0105 Joint Health Facilities.** Reviewed by the Committee (Report 1/2018), this project provided for establishment or upgrade of joint user garrison health centres at 13 different sites nationally. RAAF Base Townsville is hosting one of those centres, with works anticipated to be complete by mid-2021.

b. **LAND 4502 Facilities to Support additional CH-47F Helicopters for 5th Aviation Regiment.** This project is approaching completion. Although scope is not directly related to the Project, its site selection activity has identified a location for residual material from excavations (including the fire main trenching).

Comment: While some level of disturbance is inevitable, I would hope the PFAS management approach will monitor vehicle movements of contractors and sub-contractors on/off site, ensuring the use of wash down facilities, to prevent any contaminants leaving the base, and hopefully not bringing them on site from elsewhere.

Also, is the residual material from excavations to be buried on site, in such a manner that leaching into local waterways is prevented – both for the safety of personnel on base and the health of organisms in the air and soil.