

# Memo

18 October 2018

To: The Environment and Community Committee and Local Board chairs

From: Coral Grant, (AC Project Manager - PFAS)

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**Subject: Update on the NZ Defence Force Whenuapai PFAS investigation**

Dear Committee members and Local Board chairs,

This memo provides an update on progress with the New Zealand Defence Force PFAS investigation at off-base sites in Whenuapai.

The Defence Force investigation into the presence of PFAS compounds in areas surrounding the Whenuapai Air Force Base has recently been completed.

Between 26 July and 30 August 2018, the Defence Force tested ground water (bores) and surface water on 12 properties neighbouring Whenuapai Air Base and the nearby coastal sediment, marine and freshwater life.

Auckland Council was not involved in the government's testing programme, but we have recently been advised of the test results from the Defence Force.

The Defence Force's test results show that:

- No drinking water is affected. Testing confirms that PFAS compounds are not present in deep bores, those between 200-300 metres in depth, that might be used as local water sources. In addition, drinking water in the area comes from the town supply and is not affected.
- PFAS was detected at levels below the New Zealand Ministry of Health interim drinking water guidelines in three shallow monitoring bores. The water in those bores is not used for any purpose.
- PFAS was detected in 9 out of 12 surface water samples (i.e. streams) but only two samples exceeded the Australian Department of Health Recreational Water Quality Guidelines for human health and draft Ecosystem Health guidelines.
- PFAS was detected in a small number of marine and freshwater finfish samples above the Food Safety Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) trigger values, but these levels are below the Ministry for Primary Industries PFOS food safety risk consumption guidelines for fresh or marine finfish.
- PFAS was detected in macroinvertebrates samples (such as crabs, shellfish and snails), however these were below Food Safety Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) guidelines.

The Defence Force is currently undertaking further analysis of sediment and biota results.

Test results on ground and surface water have been delivered to the small number of property owners where testing was undertaken. Government agencies are offering advice to these property owners as required.

### **Next steps**

The welfare of residents and the health of our environment continues to be Auckland Council's top priority.

The council is working closely with the Ministry for the Environment-led All of Government PFAS Working Group on understanding this emerging contaminant and any hazards that may arise from the results of the Defence Force testing related to the local community and the environment.

The council is also working closely with the Ministry for the Environment to understand its regulatory responsibilities regarding non-Crown owned land.

We will be keeping the local community, property owners and Aucklanders updated alongside the work being done by the Defence Force and other supporting government agencies.

The advice of the Ministry of Health advice remains that there is no acute health risk from exposure to PFAS compounds. There is currently no consistent evidence that environmental exposures to PFOS and PFOA causes adverse human health effects.

An independent [Expert Health Panel](#) established by the Australian Government has concluded there is mostly limited, or in some cases no evidence, that human exposure to PFAS is linked with human disease.

The council expects to receive the Defence Force's further analysis, together with the results of the Defence Force's testing at Ngataringa Bay in Devonport, around mid-November 2018.

### **More information**

More information about PFAS and the Government's response, including health and food safety advice, is available on the [Ministry for the Environment website](#).

For further information please contact:  
Coral Grant, Auckland Council Project Manager- PFAS  
021 718 050 / [coral.grant@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:coral.grant@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)