PFAS and your water

Is our water safe to drink?

Yes.

Are any of our water sources at risk of PFAS contamination from the RAAF Base Wagga?

There is no short-term risk of PFAS potentially impacting our water sources.

Has PFAS been detected in any of Riverina Water's raw water sources?

One bore at West Wagga has detected 0.02 micrograms per litre (ug/L), which is slightly above lowest concentration that can be reliably reported of 0.01 ug/L.

The detection of 0.02 ug/L is well below the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (national (0.07 ug/L) and national health based guidance value for recreational water quality (2.0 ug/L).

Riverina Water has a multitude of other water sources, all of which have not had any recorded reading of PFAS. No single water source

What is being done to manage PFAS?

Defence is working with Riverina Water, the NSW Government, and Wagga Wagga City Council to ensure the continued integrity of the Wagga Wagga water supply.

Defence's monitoring program will continue to manage any changes. Riverina Water is also conducting its own regular testing of its raw water sources as a proactive measure.

Remediation works at RAAF Base Wagga are in development by Defence and is expected to reduce the amount of PFAS moving off the base into the surrounding environment.

Defence will continue to share information about the ongoing monitoring program and continue to provide updates on how the contamination is being managed.

What is PFAS?

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been widely used globally, since the 1950s in the manufacture of household and industrial products that resist heat, stains, grease and water, and in other specialised applications including firefighting foams.

PFAS are also used in a range of domestic and industrial products and have been found near some industrial areas, sewage treatment plants and landfill sites.

PFAS consists of very stable chemicals that bioaccumulate, do not easily break down and can persist in the environment for a long time

Is exposure to PFAS a health risk?

PFAS are an emerging contaminant which means that their ecological and/or human health effects are unclear. There is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFAS causes adverse human health effects.

What is the safe level for PFAS in drinking water?

Riverina Water follows the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for PFAS of less than 0.07 micrograms per litre.

These guidelines have the expectation of someone drinking water with those PFAS concentrations every day over their lifetime.

There have been no detections of the chemicals in our drinking water above these guidelines.

What is the history of PFAS in Wagga Wagga?

The Department of Defence began using firefighting products containing PFAS as an active ingredient at the RAAF Base Wagga from the 1970s until 2004 when it phased out its use with alternative products.

Defence has been actively monitoring and tracking PFAS compounds in the groundwater from its base, with early modelling suggesting these detected compounds could reach some of Riverina Water's supply bores within the next 50 years. More recent monitoring has now indicated this timeframe may be shortened, but more modelling is to be done to get a clearer idea of impacts for the future.