



THE SENATE

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

4 December 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Contamination caused by firefighting foams at RAAF Base Williamtown and other sites**

On 30 November 2015, the Senate referred an inquiry into contamination caused by firefighting foams at RAAF Base Williamtown and other sites to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report.

A copy of the terms of reference agreed by the Senate is attached for your information.

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to the inquiry and to invite you or your organisation to make a written submission to the committee.

Also, the committee is seeking to publicise its work as widely as possible and would appreciate you referring this letter of invitation to any individual, group or organisation that you think would like to contribute to the inquiry.

Information and notes to assist in preparing submissions are available from the committee's website [www.aph.gov.au/senate/fadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/fadt) or the committee's secretariat (ph: 02 6277 3538, fax: 02 6277 5818).

The committee has requested that submissions for part (a) of the inquiry be lodged by 14 December 2015 and submissions for part (b) of the inquiry be lodged by 5 February 2016. Please contact the secretariat should an extension be required.

The committee would prefer to receive written submissions in electronic form submitted online [<https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/pages/index.aspx>] or sent by email to [fadt.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:fadt.sen@aph.gov.au) as an attached Adobe PDF or MS Word format document. The email must include full postal address and contact details.

Alternatively, written submissions may be sent to:

**Committee Secretary**  
**Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee**  
**PO Box 6100**  
**Parliament House**  
**Canberra ACT 2600**

At some stage during the inquiry, the committee normally makes submissions public. Please indicate if you would like your submission kept confidential.

The committee hopes to hear from you soon. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D Sullivan", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Mr David Sullivan  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

## Terms of reference

That the following matters, in relation to perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) contamination, be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report:

(a) by 4 February 2016 on PFOS and PFOA contamination at RAAF Base Williamtown and Australian Defence Force facilities, with reference to:

- (i) what contamination has occurred to the water, soil and any other natural or human made structures in the RAAF Base Williamtown and the surrounding environs,
- (ii) the response of, and coordination between, the Commonwealth Government, including the Department of Defence and RAAF Base Williamtown management, and New South Wales authorities to PFOS/PFOA contamination, including when base employees, local residents and businesses, Port Stephens and Newcastle City Councils, and the New South Wales Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were informed of the contamination,
- (iii) the adequacy of consultation and coordination between the Commonwealth Government, the New South Wales Government, Port Stephens and Newcastle City Council, the Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force, affected local communities and businesses, and other interested stakeholders,
- (iv) whether appropriate measures have been taken to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of Australian military and civilian personnel at RAAF Base Williamtown,
- (v) the adequacy of health advice and testing of defence and civilian personnel and members of the public exposed, or potentially exposed, to PFOS/PFOA in and around RAAF Base Williamtown,
- (vi) the adequacy of Commonwealth and state and territory government environmental and human health standards and legislation, with specific reference to PFOS/PFOA contamination at RAAF Base Williamtown,
- (vii) what progress has been made on remediation works at RAAF Base Williamtown, and the adequacy of measures to control further contamination,
- (viii) what consideration has been undertaken of financial impacts and assistance to affected business and individuals, and
- (ix) any other related matters; and

(b) by 30 April 2016 on PFOS and PFOA contamination on other Commonwealth, state and territory sites in Australia where firefighting foams containing PFOS and PFOA were used, with reference to:

- (i) what Commonwealth, state and territory facilities have been identified as having PFOS/PFOA contamination, and what facilities may potentially still be identified as being contaminated,
- (ii) the response of, and coordination between, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, local governments, commercial entities and affected local communities,
- (iii) what measures have been taken by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of people in close proximity to known affected sites,
- (iv) the adequacy of public disclosure of information about PFOS/PFOA contamination,
- (v) what consideration has been undertaken of financial impacts on affected businesses and individuals,

- (vi) the adequacy of Commonwealth and state and territory government environmental and human health standards and legislation, with specific reference to PFOS/PFOA contamination,
- (vii) what progress has been made on the remediation and the adequacy of measures to control further PFOS/PFOA contamination at affected Commonwealth, state and territory sites,
- (viii) what investigation and assessment of contaminated sites and surrounding areas has occurred, and
- (ix) any other related matters.