

February 7, 2025

RESULTS OF PFAS INVESTIGATIONS MEET HEALTH GUIDELINES

The community can now access information about per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as it relates to Norfolk Island airport and surrounding catchments on Norfolk Island Regional Council's (NIRC) website.

PFAS is a group of manufactured chemical compounds found in various household items and some firefighting foams. Its presence was identified at the Norfolk Island Fire Station in mid-2024, during routine monitoring, sparking an extensive investigation and remediation activities by NIRC at the site.

NIRC took immediate action when notified of the detection of PFAS at the fire station by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

The Department first began investigations on the island in 2020, after CSIRO identified PFAS in a water assessment activity on Norfolk in late 2019. A three-year investigation was carried out, which has been followed by regular monitoring and public reporting.

In July 2024, NIRC initiated an investigation into the fire station detection that identified cross-contamination between water tanks as the likely source. Immediate measures included additional sampling, isolating contaminated tanks, providing alternative drinking water, replacing plumbing, and installing hand sanitiser dispensers and warning signs.

Regular briefings have been held with firefighters to keep them informed of developments, and health advice sought regarding the effects of PFAS exposure.

Water samples taken during follow-up investigations have indicated that PFAS levels in the samples did not exceed Department of Health guidelines, suggesting that individuals who worked or visited the fire station between January and July 2024 were not exposed to harmful levels of PFAS.

A detailed report on the investigation and remediation actions was presented at the NIRC Ordinary Meeting on 29 January 2025, and a series of FAQs can now be viewed on NIRC's website at <https://www.nirc.gov.au/Planning-Environment/Planning-and-Environment-Services/Environment/Public-health/PFAS>.

Further information about PFAS monitoring and management activities undertaken by DITRDCA and its consultants Senversa can be accessed online at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/territories/norfolk-island/pfas>.

ENDS