



Australian Government

Department of Health

**Professor Brendan Murphy
Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer**

MEDIA STATEMENT

14 March 2018

RAAF Base Tindal PFAS Blood Testing to Start This Week

Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy, has today announced that a Voluntary Blood Testing Program for people impacted by PFAS contamination from RAAF Base Tindal in Katherine will begin on Saturday 17 March.

The Australian Government has committed \$5.7 million for a community support package which includes a Voluntary Blood Testing Program, an epidemiological study and dedicated mental health and counselling services.

While there is currently no consistent evidence that exposure to PFAS causes health problems in people, as part of the response to community concerns, the Government is funding a Voluntary Blood Testing Program, as well as pre- and post-blood test counselling, to ensure people are fully informed about what the results mean for them and their families.

The Voluntary Blood Testing Program will provide one free PFAS blood test to those people who live or work, or have lived or worked, in the RAAF Base Tindal Investigation Area. This includes people currently living elsewhere who previously lived or worked in the Investigation Area in Katherine.

The Voluntary Blood Testing Program will be available for a 13-month period from 17 March 2018 until 30 April 2019.

The Government has also extended the Voluntary Blood Testing Program in Williamstown, NSW, and Oakey, Queensland, until 30 April 2019 to better align with the blood serum component of an epidemiological study being conducted by the Australian National University (ANU).

A positive blood test for PFAS contaminants will not indicate, by itself, any harm to a person's health, therefore it is important that as many residents as possible who choose to have their blood tested also participate in the longer term epidemiological study. The epidemiological study will assist in improving our understanding of the potential health effects associated with exposure to PFAS.

It is expected that the ANU will visit Katherine in the near future to provide more information to the community about the epidemiological study.

The Northern Territory Primary Health Network has been funded to commission dedicated mental health and counselling services to support the Katherine community in this period of uncertainty. People who need support should discuss this with their GP, so that they can be referred to the appropriate services. People do not need to have had a PFAS blood test to access these services.

Telephone and online counselling services, through *Support Now*, are available also to the community. These service can be accessed anywhere in Australia by calling: 1300 096 257 or by visiting supportnow.org.au.

More information on the community support package is available at health.gov.au/pfas.

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