

Our Ref: MA007957

Ms Tracey Anton
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Dear Tracey

PFAS Contaminated Land in Victoria

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 October 2018 to myself and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, regarding per-and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) contaminated property. The Minister has asked me to respond on behalf of the government, as Victoria has entered caretaker period leading up to the Victorian State Election scheduled for 24 November 2018.

I acknowledge your concerns regarding the potential human health impacts from exposure to PFAS. Exposure to PFAS is of increasing concern in many communities worldwide as there is a gap in current knowledge regarding the environmental health impacts. Much is being done in this space to better understand PFAS and Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) is playing a significant role. As Victoria's Chief Environmental Scientist, I would like to clarify the incorrect information that is in the public domain about PFAS.

Current evidence of the health effects from PFAS in humans is inconsistent. No firm conclusions can be drawn about the direct relationship between exposure and health effects, and at what concentrations health effects may be observed. Based on this evidence, EPA takes a precautionary approach to avoid PFAS exposure wherever practicable.

EPA has an extensive program of work assessing emerging chemicals of concern, including PFAS in the environment and biota, to make informed decisions about exposure and risk, and to inform community of potential risks. EPA's assessments are consistent with the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (PFAS NEMP). The PFAS NEMP is used by all Australian state and territory governments and provides a consistent, risk-based framework for the environmental regulation of PFAS-contaminated materials and sites. The NEMP is based on national and international best practice standards including guidelines developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand, the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality, guidance from the Australian Department of Health, National Environment Protection Guidelines and the Canadian Federal Environmental Quality Guidelines. The analysis of PFAS is complex and can result in discrepancies between different laboratories. This is internationally recognised, and EPA is working with several agencies to resolve these concerns.

EPA is aware that PFAS has been detected in onsite groundwater bores, a dam and nearby drainage lines at Esso's Longford gas plant. EPA has issued a number of statutory notices to Esso regarding identification and clean-up of PFAS contamination. As of March 2018, Esso is required to undertake a full environmental audit in accordance



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with section 53V of the *Environment Protection Act 1970*. Esso is also required to implement an approved Interim Clean Up Plan. EPA continues to work with Esso to ensure the appropriate actions are taken to protect the environment and human health from the effects of PFAS. EPA has been engaging with all affected residents in the Longford area, including at 389 Carrs Creek Road, to better understand potential PFAS contamination. I am unable to comment regarding the personal circumstances of the residents at this address, but welcome the family to get in touch should they have concerns.

EPA has also been working with the Department of Defence in its assessment of PFAS contamination, including in the vicinity of RAAF Base East Sale. I attended the community information session on 2 August 2018 to engage with community about their concerns regarding EPA's work to date, which I recall we discussed in detail. As I advise all concerned communities, the best way to reduce the potential impact of PFAS is to remove sources of potential exposure. This includes reducing the potential of PFAS to enter the home, including through dust particles and other sources such as dirt carried on boots. I encourage all communities that are potentially affected by PFAS to prevent exposure based on what is most practicable for their personal circumstances.

EPA is currently working with other Victorian Government agencies to undertake a broad program of work to investigate PFAS and provide precautionary advice to communities. EPA's work is key to informing literature values and ensuring they are appropriate for a Victorian setting. To date, EPA has sampled:

- 79 surface water, sediment, and soil samples across Victoria.
- 166 ducks from 19 wetlands/lakes across the state.
- 40 fish
- All fish and duck samples were accompanied by corresponding surface water and sediment samples.
- 92 Livestock, including sheep and cattle.

EPA uses this work to maintain up to date precautionary PFAS advice which is available on our website: www.epa.vic.gov.au/your-environment/land-and-groundwater/pfas-in-victoria. EPA's work will continue to further inform environmental and human health risks and best protect all Victorians.

Given the complex nature of work occurring, there are some areas of your correspondence which I am unable to address. Matters relating to vaccines and human PFAS testing should be directed to the Department of Health and Human Services. Planning matters should be directed to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

I thank you for sharing your concerns on this important issue.

Yours sincerely



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