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NORTH

PFAS contamination from firefighting foam found in groundwater at Parafield Gardens

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February 4, 2019 4:17pm

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Contamination from a firefighting foam continues to be found across Adelaide, with the latest pollution being detected near Parafield Airport.

Testing of groundwater bores at Parafield Gardens has revealed the presence of poly-fluorinated alkyl substances, widely known as PFAS, at levels potentially dangerous to human health.

The chemical previously has been found within and near the RAAF Edinburgh base, Adelaide Airport and at metropolitan fire stations, particularly at Largs North. Testing of groundwater is continuing at various metropolitan locations to determine how far the PFAS has spread and what risks it could pose.

This testing, which involves taking samples of groundwater, will now be expanded at Parafield Gardens within a 200m wide zone adjacent to Bardsley Ave. The zone

contains the Karrendi Primary School and Parafield Gardens Sports and Social Club.

Private consultants are analysing the groundwater samples on behalf of Adelaide Airport Ltd, which operates Adelaide Airport and Parafield Airport.

Testing of Bridges Estate, on the southern edge of Parafield Airport, had found PFAS at levels which were not believed to be hazardous.



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In a statement, Adelaide Airport said no groundwater bores had been registered at properties adjacent to Parafield Airport where PFAS had entered the environment.

However, inquiries would now be conducted to determine if groundwater had been extracted from bores at Parafield Gardens without authorities being notified.

“Groundwater tests have been undertaken in a small area of Parafield Gardens (200m wide zone adjacent Bardsley Ave) and Mawson Lakes (Bridges Estate only – north of Elder Smith Rd) closest to the airport,” said the statement.

“These tests showed PFAS levels generally below the relevant drinking water guideline. A couple of monitoring wells in Parafield Gardens were marginally above the guideline. All wells in Mawson Lakes (Bridges Estate) were below the guideline.”

Adelaide Airport said four additional monitoring wells would be installed in Parafield Gardens west of the airport “as an abundance of caution”.

“Further groundwater use surveys are being conducted in Parafield Gardens to determine any use of groundwater extraction bores adjacent to the airport in case

further environmental investigations are needed to be undertaken” it said.

“There are no registered groundwater extraction bores in the areas selected for further survey and the water is considered too salty to drink. However, as a precaution the airport is seeking to understand if any unregistered bores are present and in use.”



urton orchid growers Graham and Sue Guest are concerned about PFAS contamination from the RAAF Edinburgh base which has been found in the Kaurana Wetlands next to their property. Picture: Naomi Jellicoe

Adelaide Airport said the survey only related to upper level groundwater extraction. Studies had shown the only way to come into contact with PFAS was through bores.

“Mains tap water is not impacted,” it said. “The survey is not relevant to those without a bore on their property.”

Fire retardant foam containing PFAS was widely used at military and civil airports across Australia from the 1970s until it was discontinued in 2000.

Confirmation of the detection of PFAS at Parafield Gardens comes weeks after the Defence Department released a detailed study which showed widespread contamination within and near the RAAF Edinburgh Air Base.

Further testing is now being conducted to determine exactly how far the PFAS has spread into nearby waterways and properties, including market gardens.

The Defence Department said the next step in its investigation was a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA)

“The HHERA will assess the key exposure pathways and identify any risks of PFAS exposure to people, plants and animals,” it said in a statement. “Defence has completed additional sampling to inform the HHERA and is currently

analysing the sampling data.” The department said it would update its initial report “to fill minor data gaps and include results of the HHERA sampling”.

“In addition, a PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP) is being developed to outline appropriate options for PFAS remediation and management.”