



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Jandakot Airport PFAS Investigation

November 2023

Dear Resident,

I am writing to inform you that Jandakot Airport has signed up to participate in Tranche 2 of the Australian Government's national Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Airports Investigation Program (the Program). The Program will identify the extent of PFAS contamination at Jandakot Airport and develop a PFAS management plan to address any identified risks. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts (the department) is delivering the Program, and is also the Australian Government environmental regulator of Jandakot Airport under the *Airports Act 1996*.

As you may be aware, groundwater testing undertaken by Jandakot Airport in November 2022 and June 2023 detected elevated levels of PFAS at some residential properties in the suburb of Jandakot. Therefore, you are receiving this letter because your property is located in the residential area previously tested by Jandakot Airport. Jandakot Airport has directly communicated with those residents whose groundwater was found to have elevated levels of PFAS contamination, and provided appropriate precautionary advice to mitigate exposure risks. The environmental regulator – the department's Airport Environment Officer – is also actively engaged on this matter to ensure the airport continues to meet its environmental management responsibilities.

Jandakot Airport's participation in the Program will ensure thorough, independent and targeted testing is undertaken across the entire airport site and at potentially impacted neighbouring land. The investigation will consider all previous sampling undertaken by Jandakot Airport. Importantly, the investigation will be conducted by an expert contaminated land specialist and will be independently audited to ensure compliance with relevant regulations, national guidance and best practice.

A tender process to engage contaminated land specialists to lead Tranche 2 Program investigations, including at Jandakot Airport, is currently underway and a contract is anticipated to be signed in February 2024.

In the meantime, to ensure PFAS exposure risks continue to be appropriately managed, funds from the Program are being directed to Jandakot Airport to undertake a third round of testing in residential areas prior to the end of 2023. Jandakot Airport will be engaging directly with impacted residents regarding this additional testing, which will be undertaken in accordance with the department's requirements and national standards.

For more information about the Program please see the attached *Frequently Asked Questions*. Additional information is also available on the department's website at www.infrastructure.gov.au/PFAS. We will provide you with further information in 2024 once the contaminated land specialist is contracted for the Jandakot investigation.

Chris Connolly
Director
PFAS Taskforce
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts



Jandakot Airport - PFAS Airports Investigation Program

Frequently Asked Questions

November 2023

What are PFAS?

PFAS stands for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances. These substances are manufactured chemicals that have been used in a range of household, medical and industrial products since the 1950s. Due to their effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires, firefighting foams that contained perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) – both of which belong to the PFAS group of chemicals – as active ingredients were previously used extensively worldwide and within Australia, including at civilian airports.

What is the PFAS Airports Investigation Program?

The Australian Government has committed \$130.5 million to the PFAS Airports Investigation Program (the Program) at civilian airports where the Commonwealth historically provided firefighting services which used PFAS-containing foams. The Program aims to determine the nature and extent of PFAS contamination at airports through independently audited whole-of-site testing, and to develop robust management plans to address any identified risks.

Airport participation in the Program is voluntary, with investigations under the main Program being undertaken in tranches to manage market capacity constraints. In early 2022, a Pilot Program of eight airports commenced to test a whole-of-site investigative approach and develop a PFAS Investigation Framework to support the delivery of the main Program. The Pilot Program was completed in June 2023, and these airports transitioned to form Tranche 1 of the main Program on 1 July 2023. Tranche 2 will comprise a further eight airports, including Jandakot Airport. The Program is expected to be completed by 30 June 2027.

Who is delivering the Program?

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department) administers the Program. The department engages expert contaminated land specialists to conduct site investigation works and accredited contamination site auditors to provide independent technical oversight.

When will investigations at Jandakot start?

Procurement activities to engage contaminated land specialists for Tranche 2 airports, including Jandakot Airport, are currently underway. The department expects to engage a contaminated land specialist to lead the Jandakot Airport investigation in February 2024.

Why are further PFAS investigations being undertaken at Jandakot Airport?

The department is aware of Jandakot Airport's investigations to date, including sampling on some neighbouring residential properties. While these prior investigations will be considered, participation in the Program will ensure independently audited whole-of-site testing – and appropriate off-site testing – is undertaken, and a nationally consistent management plan is developed to effectively manage any on or off-site contamination.

How will the contaminated land specialist be selected?

The department will engage the most appropriate contaminated land specialist for each airport in Tranche 2 following a competitive, merit-based process, in line with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.

Will the contaminated land specialist previously engaged by Jandakot Airport conduct the Program investigations?

Not necessarily. The contract will be awarded to the contaminated land specialist assessed by the department as best meeting the evaluation criteria for the works.

What will the Program deliver?

The Program investigations are undertaken in accordance with the *National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999* (as updated in 2013), and will generally include the following processes:

- Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) – a desktop review of prior PFAS use and previous sampling, site inspections and in some cases may include limited sampling.
- Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) – whole-of-site sampling and analysis to determine nature, extent and exposure pathways.
- Human Health and/or Ecological Risk Assessment (HHERA) – to be undertaken if PFAS is detected above guideline levels and exposure pathways have been confirmed.
- PFAS Management Plan – to monitor and manage contamination.

All works undertaken as part of the Program are subject to independent technical oversight by accredited contamination site auditors, and will be in accordance with the *PFAS National Environmental Management Plan 2.0* (PFAS NEMP).

Will the Program consider previous PFAS investigations?

Yes. The Program will independently consider all previous PFAS investigations, including sampling undertaken on neighbouring land by Jandakot Airport in 2022 and 2023. The contaminated land specialist will consider what further testing might be required on and off-airport (including of residential bores) to ensure that appropriate sampling locations and methodologies are used to build a clear picture of the nature and extent of contamination.

Will the Program investigate off-site contamination?

Yes. The Program will investigate PFAS both on airport land and migration pathways from the airport. The scope of off-site sampling and investigations will be determined by the contaminated land specialist once engaged in February 2024.

What sampling will take place?

The investigation may involve sampling of groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment and biota (plants, animals or produce). This sampling seeks to understand where PFAS contamination exists, how it moves through the environment and how people, plants or animals are potentially exposed.

Will the results of the investigations be made public?

Yes. All reports, including PFAS Management Plans, prepared as part of the Program are expected to be published before the Program ends. Where required, information will be de-identified.

How long will the investigation take?

The duration of the Program investigations will depend on the nature and extent of contamination and the size and complexity of the airport site and surrounds. PFAS investigations at each airport are anticipated to take two to three years on average to complete.

Does the Program include funds for remediation?

No. The Program is currently funded as an investigation program. As part of the Program, PFAS Management Plans will be developed in collaboration with airports, that will outline a reasonable and practicable approach to the management and monitoring of PFAS-related risks.

Who is the environmental regulator of Jandakot Airport?

The department administers the environmental regulatory regime at leased federal airports, including at Jandakot Airport. Leased federal airports are owned by the Commonwealth and leased on a long-term basis to Airport Lessee Companies. These airports are subject to a comprehensive environmental regulatory framework established by the *Airports Act 1996* and the *Airports (Environment Protection) Regulations 1997*. This regulatory framework applies to the management of all on-ground environmental issues, including air, soil, water, noise and chemical pollution on-airport.

Regulatory oversight of the day-to-day environmental management of civilian airports located on Commonwealth land is provided through a network of Airport Environment Officers (AEOs). AEOs work with Airport Lessee Companies (such as Jandakot Airport Holdings), airport tenants and state and territory environmental protection bodies to support best-practice environmental management at airports.

How will residents be engaged?

The department and its contaminated land specialists will actively engage with the community during the Program investigations, and will provide regular updates to residents. The department requires the contaminated land specialist to communicate the stakeholder engagement approach, and proposed off-site testing regime, with residents soon after they are appointed (expected to be in February 2024).

Which other stakeholders will be consulted?

The department – and the contaminated land specialist once appointed - will continue to consult and work with a range of stakeholders to deliver the Program. These include Jandakot Airport, the WA Department of Health and the WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

What should residents do while the Program investigation is undertaken?

If elevated levels of PFAS have been previously detected in groundwater at your property, you will have received precautionary health advice on the use of your bore water from Jandakot Airport (prepared in consultation with the WA Department of Health). Please continue to follow this guidance.

There is no need for any action if elevated levels of PFAS have not been detected at your property.

Residents will be immediately advised if the Program investigation finds elevated levels of PFAS at their property, and will be provided with precautionary health advice.

Can I sell my property while the investigation is underway?

Yes. The WA Government has confirmed that there are no restrictions on listing properties for sale.

Where can I go for health advice?

Information on health and health studies undertaken in Australia is available from www.pfas.gov.au.

Information is also available at HealthyWA at www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Safety-and-first-aid/Chemicals-and-contaminants.

You may also contact the WA Department of Health Environmental Health Directorate at doh.chemicalhazards@health.wa.gov.au or on (08) 9222 2000 if you have any concerns relating to your specific circumstances.

Visit your medical practitioner for advice regarding any medical related matters.

Where can I go for further information?

Further information on the Program is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/PFAS, or you can contact the department directly by emailing JandakotPFAS@infrastructure.gov.au.

To find out more about PFAS and the Australian Government's approach, please visit www.pfas.gov.au.

National health guidance is available at www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/enhealth-guidance.