1. Fire-fighting foam containing the chemicals perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was used in fire-fighting and fire-fighting training from the 1970s to the early-mid 2000s. Use of the foams has occurred at sites such as civil airports, military air bases, large fuel storage terminals and refineries, and ports.
2. A plume of groundwater contaminated with PFOS and PFOA, along with other chemicals of concern, has been detected on and around the Army Aviation Centre Oakey (AACO) on the Darling Downs. This contamination is associated with the use of fire-fighting foam containing PFOS and PFOA on the base between 1970 and 2005.
3. In November 2015, the Senate referred the following matters to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee: Contamination of Australian Defence Force facilities (Part A), and contamination of other sites using firefighting foams (Part B). The Terms of Reference, among other issues, seek information on state and territory facilities that have been or may be identified as having PFOS/PFOA contamination and responses by state and territory governments.
4. The Queensland Government is aware that PFOS and PFOA have been identified as ‘emerging contaminants of concern’ and are associated with the use of aqueous fire-fighting foams. The Queensland Government supports a nationally consistent approach being developed to: screening guidelines, as well as assessment, management and remediation protocols for sites that are identified as being contaminated with PFOS and PFOA.
5. A nationally consistent approach will support effective communication about impacts of contamination that is based on rigorous scientific assessment. It will also support clarity about roles and responsibilities, where there are cross-jurisdictional implications.
6. Cabinet endorsed the Queensland Government submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry into Contamination of Australia’s Defence Force facilities and other Commonwealth, state and territory sites.
7. Cabinet approved that the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef convey the Queensland Government submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on behalf of the Queensland Government.
8. *Attachments*
* [Queensland Government Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into contamination of sites using firefighting foams](Attachments/Submission.PDF)