

Environmental monitoring and assessment—Gold Coast

The Department of Environment and Science has completed initial preliminary testing of groundwater in the vicinity of Golden Four Drive near the Gold Coast Airport.

Airservices Australia is currently investigating the extent of PFAS contamination at and surrounding the Gold Coast Airport as a result of the historic use of PFAS firefighting foams.

What is being investigated?

The department has become aware of an elevated result of PFAS levels from a bore on a private property on the Gold Coast. The property is at Bilinga.

It commenced this sampling following a report by a member of the public indicating that PFAS may be present in groundwater at that location and after confirming with Airservices Australia that the location was outside of the area of its current investigation.

The results of the preliminary tests suggest that two of the locations tested recorded PFAS levels that are above the national drinking water guidelines, but below the recreational water use guidelines. The department will carry out further testing to validate the preliminary data.

The department is working with relevant parties—including residents in the nearby vicinity, the Council of the City of Gold Coast and Queensland Health—to gain a better understanding of the circumstances and investigate the matter further.

What are PFASs?

Per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFASs, have been used since the 1950s in a range of common household products and in some specialty applications. These include in the manufacture of non-stick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging; some industrial processes; and in some types of fire-fighting foam. The substances are not manufactured in Australia and are no longer directly used in consumer products.

As well as consumer products, PFAS have also been previously used in some industrial processes, including in certain types of fire-fighting foams. PFASs are commonly found in the environment at low levels due to their widespread use in consumer and speciality products over many decades.

More information is available on the Queensland Government website www.qld.gov.au/pfas.

Can I use groundwater for recreation uses such as watering flowers and vegetables, washing my car, boat or surfboard or filling my swimming pool?

Residents are reminded that bore water in urban environments can carry any number of contaminants and should not be used unless it has been tested and known to be completely safe.

Based on the results from groundwater testing in this area, bore water should not be used for drinking, and it is advised not to use it for bathing, watering edible plants, filling swimming pools, food preparation or cooking unless it has been tested and treated to the extent necessary for the intended use.

It is preferable to fill your pool or spa with town drinking water because it is treated and safe, good quality water.

Washing cars, boats, surfboards and irrigating lawns and flower beds is not likely to cause any risk to health from exposure to PFAS.

What should I do in the meantime?

General advice about using bore water should continue to be considered and residents are reminded that bore water in urban environments can carry any number of contaminants and should not be used for recreation or consumption unless it is tested and known to be completely safe.

General advice is available on the Queensland Government website (www.qld.gov.au/pfas) about avoiding potential exposure to PFAS for anyone who is concerned—this includes avoiding using groundwater from bores in

areas where PFAS investigations are underway.

What will the government do now?

The department will continue working with Airservices Australia and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development to determine what further action is needed.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Should you have any questions please contact the department on 13 QGOV. If you have concerns about your health please speak to your GP. Your GP can contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) if they require further information.