



## MEDIA RELEASE

12 December 2017

### Council and Airport Calls on State and Federal Government to urgently address site contamination

The Town of Port Hedland and the Port Hedland International Airport (PHIA) is calling for an urgent government response, as the Airport joins a long list of emerging sites across Australia identified as being contaminated with PFAS (per-and polfluoroalkyl substance).

The contamination relates to the historical use of fire-fighting foams by Airservices Australia (AsA) which operates an aviation rescue firefighting station. The facility has been located at the Airport since 1963 and is regulated by Federal legislation.

The Town of Port Hedland was the principal landholder of the Port Hedland Airport site from 1963-2015, with a 50-year lease granted to the PHIA Asset Trust over the airport and surrounding precinct in 2016.

As a part of the standard due diligence for the agreement, an extensive baseline study was conducted by independent consultants to establish the extent of any pre-existing contamination of the leased area.

Preliminary results indicated PFAS contamination of land and ground water directly related to the historical use of fire-fighting foam for training or operational purposes.

The Town of Port Hedland and PHIA immediately notified the State Department of Water and Environment Regulation (DWER), as required under statutory obligations and the findings triggered the development of a remediation action plan (RAP), which is currently under way for the site.

According to Mayor Camillo Blanco, PFAS contamination is affecting towns across Australia and calls for a coordinated response from State and Federal Government:

"We are taking this matter very seriously. The health and wellbeing of our community and the environment is of primary importance.

"Port Hedland is not an isolated case. Across the country, there is still a lack of scientific understanding and sufficient proven technology and methodology for finding real solutions.

"We are now requesting urgent assistance from both the State and Federal government to establish a clear policy, with proven remediation strategies for both Port Hedland and the country.

"We're doing everything possible to ensure that this matter is appropriately managed. It is our shared view, however, that the responsibility for remediation sits with Airservices Australia.

"I don't want to see our Town being left to clean up the legacy issues and having to foot the bill.

"Under Federal legislation, Airservices Australia has operated and managed fire-fighting facilities on site for decades. The Town of Port Hedland had no control over the firefighting suppressants used during this time.



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"Although there is no immediate risk to residents, homes, or our drinking water, we need to be presented with all of the facts and the funds to address the issue thoroughly.

"Recent tests do not indicate any contamination to our water supply and strict monitoring will continue. The bore fields for the town's drinking supply are located in two external catchment areas, more than 80 kilometres away.

"We are committed to keeping the community updated on all aspects of this national issue and lobbying state and federal government to take immediate action."

The Chairman of the Port Hedland International Airport (PHIA), The Honourable Cheryl Edwardes, stated that the Airport would continue to work closely with the Town of Port Hedland and all key stakeholders to address risk mitigation strategies:

"This is a significant issue not only for Port Hedland and the Pilbara, but for the entire nation.

"We have already seen case studies in Department of Defence airbase locations such as Katherine, Oakey and Exmouth, with concerns continuing to arise in other areas.

"PHIA is committed to engaging with all key parties and to working swiftly and collaboratively to help achieve sustainable solutions for our community.

"We are also confident that Airservices Australia will honour its responsibility in this area and will not abandon its responsibilities with regard to this issue, as stated at this year's Australian Airports Association Conference. In addition, we trust that the Department of Water Environmental Regulation, as the regulatory authority for contaminated sites, will take a lead role.

"It's also important to note that under the Civil Aviation Safety Authority Manual of Standards, that when firefighting and rescue services are provided, a burden of responsibility rests with the federal government.

"PFAS is an emerging problem in Australia and it is imperative that work takes place across all levels of government to develop evidence-based remediation methods to rapidly resolve the situation."

Public enquiries relating to the use of PFAS fire-fighting foams or historical use of the equipment should be directed to Airservices Australia.

Ongoing sampling and data collection to monitor the site and mitigate future risk will continue.

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### Media Enquiries

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