



Minister for Health and Aged Care  
Minister for Sport  
**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP**

## **Media Release**

4 August 2016

### **Independent Review of toxicity levels of PFAS chemicals**

The Turnbull Government has today honoured its commitment to investigate the potential risks to human health from the long term use of legacy fire fighting foams.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley confirmed today, as a first step, the appointment of an independent consultant to review the interim toxicity reference values for the chemicals per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water.

“The current interim guidelines on PFAS were developed by the cross-jurisdictional Standing Committee on Environmental Health, or enHealth,” Ms Ley said.

“In June 2016, enHealth reviewed overseas approaches for setting guideline values for PFAS in drinking water, and provided additional guidance, including recommendations for Australian guideline values based on the European Food Safety Authority approach.

“The Government has appointed Adjunct Professor Andrew Bartholomaeus to conduct an independent evaluation that will consider approaches and assumptions used and relevance of these approaches to the Australian context, having regard to current Australian regulatory science policy.

“The Review will commence immediately and report at the end of August 2016.”

Minister Ley said Adjunct Professor Bartholomaeus is an expert in toxicology and chemicals regulation.

“He has advised World Health Organization expert bodies that provide human safety assessments of chemicals and recommend toxicity values.

“He has also held senior toxicology roles with the Australian Government in Food Standards Australia and New Zealand, the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of Chemical Safety.

“His experience in best practice health risk assessment makes him the ideal person to undertake this important review,” Ms Ley said.

“The Australian Government is committed to protecting the health and safety of our communities and our environment and shares concerns about PFAS contamination of land and water. We will be working with states and territories on a national approach to the issue.”

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## Terms of Reference

### Independent Review of enHealth Interim Guidance Terms of Reference

The Commonwealth Government has commissioned an independent review of the interim guidance values established by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) for perfluorinated compounds in drinking water and recreational water.

EnHealth released the interim guidance values in June 2016 after consultation with relevant health experts. The interim guidance values agreed by enHealth are based on the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) guidance values, and are intended for use in site investigations in Australia pending development of final guidance values by Food Standards Australia New Zealand later this year.

The independent review will consider:

- (1) Approaches and assumptions used by EFSA, as outlined in the reports *Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and their salts, Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain* (2008) and *Perfluoroalkylated substances in food: occurrence and dietary exposure* (2012).
- (2) Approaches and assumptions used by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), as outlined in the 2016 *Health Effects Support Document for Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS)* and the 2016 *Health Effects Support Document for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA)*.
- (3) The applicability and relevance of these approaches and assumptions in the Australian context, having regard to existing Australian regulatory science policy as described in such guidance materials as:
  - (i) Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority *Data guidelines* (<http://apvma.gov.au/registrations-and-permits/data-guidelines>) and *Application of science to regulatory risk assessment* (<http://apvma.gov.au/node/15486>)
  - (ii) the enHealth *Environmental Health Risk Assessment, Guidelines for Assessing Human Health Risks from Environmental Hazards* (2012);
  - (iii) the FSANZ *Risk Analysis in Food Regulation* publication: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/riskanalysisfoodregulation/Pages/default.aspx>
  - (iv) the *National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme Handbook* for notifiers: <https://www.nicnas.gov.au/regulation-and-compliance/nicnas-handbook>
  - (v) the National Health and Medical Research (NHMRC) *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water* (2008) and NHMRC *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* (2016).

A report will be provided to the Minister for Health, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, for consideration and appropriate action through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Health Council, and for subsequent consideration by relevant state and territory agencies. The Minister for Health will ensure the implications of the report's key findings are communicated to affected communities and that key findings inform future activities within the Australian context.

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