

PFAS CONTAMINATION — ALCOA

1370. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Will the Minister please provide all details available regarding the extent and nature of the suspected environmental contamination by PFAS at the following sites:
  - (a) Alcoa's McCoy mine site;
  - (b) Alcoa's Myara mine site;
  - (c) Wagerup refinery former fire training and tank areas; and
  - (d) Lot 99 Cockburn Road, Naval Base, north east of the Kwinana Refinery?
- (2) On which dates was the suspected contamination at each of the sites in (1) reported?
- (3) Was the suspected contamination reported by Alcoa?
- (4) If no to (3), how was the suspected contamination reported?
- (5) Will the Minister please provide all details available regarding the PFAS contaminated water incidents requiring DWER works approval application assessments at the:
  - (a) Arundel mine site; and
  - (b) Orion mine site?
- (6) On which dates was the PFAS contaminated water at each of the sites in (5) reported?
- (7) Was the PFAS contaminated water reported by Alcoa?
- (8) If no to (7), how was the incident reported?
- (9) Has DWER conducted any monitoring of Alcoa and South32 operated sites to assess possible PFAS contamination?
- (10) If yes to (9), please provide dates, locations and results of monitoring?
- (11) What penalties exist under the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*?

**Hon Darren West replied:**

- (1)
  - (a)–(b) A Detailed Site Investigation commissioned by Alcoa of Australia found that some per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) impacts at the Huntly mine site's McCoy and Myara mining areas are associated with historical testing of fire suppression systems. This testing involved discharging the contents on sealed areas within vehicle workshops. Wash water from the workshops was passed through the mine's water treatment circuit or discharged into sumps. Some other impacts resulted from activation of onboard vehicle fire-suppression systems, either due to vehicle fires or equipment malfunction. The results of sampling to date indicate that PFAS impacts are largely confined to on-site sumps and operational process water dams.
  - (c) Alcoa commissioned a limited site investigation in 2017 at the Wagerup refinery former fire training and tanks areas, to facilitate a construction project in the north-west of the refinery. Several PFAS compounds were detected in shallow soil samples from the fire-fighting training area. PFAS were not detected in groundwater in the two wells drilled within the approximate extent of the fire training area.
  - (d) Alcoa commissioned a soil and groundwater investigation of the Lot 99 Cockburn Road Naval Base tank farm, where chemicals and fuels used in the refinery are stored, and the adjacent social club and sports oval, in 2018. Several PFAS compounds were detected in shallow soil samples from a former fire rescue training area, in the northern part of the tank farm, and in soil samples taken near the social club oval, where historical fire-fighting activities are reported to have taken place. PFAS were also detected in groundwater at the tank farm, and in upgradient monitoring wells located south of the social club oval.
- (2) The McCoy and Myara mining areas were reported under section 11 of the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003* (CS Act) on 15 December 2020.

The Wagerup refinery was originally reported under section 11 of the CS Act on 4 May 2007; information on PFAS found at the former fire training and tank areas was first provided to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) on 7 April 2020.

Information on contamination issues at Lot 99 Cockburn Road in Naval Base was originally reported to DWER before the CS Act commenced on 1 December 2006. The results of testing for PFAS compounds were provided to DWER on 1 October 2019.

- (3)–(4) Under section 96(1) of the CS Act, the identity of a person who reports a known or suspected contaminated site under section 11 or 12 is confidential.
- (5) A Works Approval application was submitted to DWER on 23 March 2022 seeking approval to construct a pipeline to transport PFAS contaminated water from a sump located at Orion mining area to the Arundel mining area, water storage ponds and a PFAS water treatment unit positioned at Arundel. The application was withdrawn on 19 April 2023.
- (a)–(b) A Detailed Site Investigation commissioned by Alcoa found that some PFAS impacts at the Willowdale mine site’s Arundel and Orion mining areas are associated with historical testing of fire suppression systems. As at Huntly, the testing involved discharging the contents on sealed areas within vehicle workshops. Wash water from the workshops was passed through the mine’s water treatment circuit or discharged into sumps. Some other impacts resulted from activation of onboard vehicle fire-suppression systems, either due to vehicle fires or equipment malfunction. The results of sampling to date indicate that PFAS impacts are largely confined to on-site sumps and operational process water dams.
- (6) The Arundel and Orion mining areas were reported under section 11 of the CS Act on 15 December 2020.
- (7)–(8) See answer to (3).
- (9) No.
- (10) Not applicable.
- (11) The penalties set out in the CS Act are as follows:

Section	Description	Penalty	Daily Penalty
10(11)	Contravening a condition to which an Exemption order made by the Minister is subject	\$250 000	\$50 000
11(3)	Failure (by a person with a reporting duty) to report a known or suspected contaminated site	\$250 000	\$50 000
11(9)	Reporting a site maliciously and without reasonable grounds to suspect it is contaminated	\$250 000	-
12(6)	Failure to report sites in accordance with a programme for reporting approved under section 12(1)	\$250 000	\$50 000
30(6)	Providing false or misleading information in relation to a request for the Chief Executive Officer’s (CEO) approval of a transfer of responsibility for remediation	\$250 000	\$50 000
43(1)	Failure to comply with requirements of an investigation, clean up or hazard abatement notice given under Part 4	\$500 000	\$100 000
54(2)	Land owner or occupier’s refusal or failure to give, without reasonable cause, permission to enter land to carry out remediation or comply with a Part 4 notice	\$500 000	\$100 000
54(5)	Failure to provide information to the Contaminated Sites Committee, or provision of false or misleading information, in relation to the Committee’s consideration of whether a land owner or occupier who refuses or fails to give permission to enter land should become responsible for its remediation	\$250 000	\$50 000
68	Land owner’s failure to give written disclosure of contamination status to potential owners, mortgagees or lessees at least 14 days before transaction completes, and provide copy to the CEO	\$125 000	\$25 000
70(3)	Contaminated sites auditor carrying out duties other than in accordance with the written authority given by the CEO	\$125 000	\$25 000

**Extract from *Hansard***  
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Hon Dr Brad Pettitt; Hon Darren West

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71	Offences relating to accreditation, including provision of false or misleading information	\$125 000	-
74	Provision of false or misleading information to an auditor in connection with a mandatory auditor's report (MAR), or provision by an auditor of false or misleading information in a MAR	\$250 000	-
93(3)	Failure to provide information on wells in an area where underground eater may be contaminated, when requested by the CEO	\$50 000	\$10 000
94	Providing false or misleading information for the purposes of the CS Act	\$125 000	\$25 000
95	Victimisation or taking detrimental action against a person providing information under the CS Act	\$125 000	\$25 000
96	Breach of duty of confidentiality in relation to information obtained under the CS Act	\$125 000	\$25 000