



# WORD BACK

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## PFAS Blood Testing

The UFU has long driven the campaign to eliminate the use of firefighting foams containing perfluorinated compounds (PFAS) due to potential health risks associated with significant exposure.

In South Australia, foams containing PFOS were phased out in 2007, and in 2014 the use of PFOA was phased out within the SAMFS. We are advised that all stocks of PFOA firefighting foam have now been removed and disposed of, by the Service.

While we concede there is still some debate about the environmental and health impacts associated with the historical use of firefighting foam, the union makes no bones about *our* concerns around PFAS, its effects on the environment and on human beings, particularly firefighters and we strongly believe a cautionary approach is warranted.



As a result, the MFS agreed to participate in the Victorian Metropolitan Fire Brigade study which tests the level of PFAS in the blood of current and former MFS staff who may have been exposed.

The UFU encourages *all* members to apply to participate in the voluntary program which was due to conclude on 30 November 2018.

The union requested that the MFS extend the cut-off date for blood testing for PFAS and they have agreed to continue the program for a further 7 months. This means you now have until 30 June 2019 to participate.

All current and former members who have not yet been tested are *urged* to make application NOW to do so. Participants receive confirmation by email from the doctor assigned to the testing 4-6 weeks after the test is conducted, about whether the blood test shows your results are above or below average. If your results are elevated the doctor will recommend that you contact him and organise an appointment to discuss the results, at no cost to you.

The MFS has endorsed a clinical trial to test methods of reducing PFAS in the blood. Members with levels of over 10ng/mL are encouraged to apply for the trial which is expected to commence early in 2019.

Members should contact Steve Pavlich or Clara Cipriani at the MFS immediately for a referral for a PFAS blood test. Please do contact the union office on 8352 7211 if you need any assistance in this matter.

*Members in country areas are reminded that you are able to have blood taken for testing at a number of regional locations, rather than have to come to Adelaide – please email [steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au](mailto:steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au) to make the necessary arrangements and obtain the written referral.*

### Largs North Station

Concerned members contacted the union office this week about a cluster of high readings of members employed at Largs North Station initiating our intervention in the matter with MFS management. In response to our request on Tuesday, DCO Mr Fletcher immediately agreed to conduct testing on both the Largs North Station site and the MV Gallantry.

The union is advised that the testing will be conducted on Tuesday, 11 December 2018 and results will be provided as a priority.

The UFU has also proposed that a meeting be conducted for members and your families in the near future to learn more and discuss this issue.

## **Identification of patterns**

As part of the arrangements for the blood testing, your data is deidentified before being provided for use by the MFS for your privacy. One consequence of this is that where there are clusters of higher than expected results at particular stations, neither the MFS nor the UFU would be aware of them.

The UFU is therefore seeking your assistance in compiling a register of results and sites, to begin the process of reviewing whether there are patterns arising in the results to date.

A questionnaire will be coming out to shop stewards in the near future.

## **Federal Parliament Announces Senate Inquiry into Aviation Firefighting**

The Aviation Branch of the UFU has been pursuing a political agenda to ensure there is a mechanism to protect and enhance standards of fire cover and emergency response at airports across Australia.

Federal MPs have been lobbied to secure a review into Air Services Australia and the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency response at Australian airports.

As a result of this work, the federal Parliament has today endorsed a Senate Inquiry into these matters.

The inquiry will be conducted by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee who will enquire into and report on the provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency response at Australian airports.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are as follows:

- (a) the current standards applicable to the provision of aerodrome rescue and firefighting services relating to community safety and the emergency personnel safety;
- (b) the standards for the provision of emergency response at Australian airports, including emergency medical response and response to structure fires and other incidents;
- (c) the comparison of safe systems of emergency response standards and systems of work for firefighting and rescue operations for structure fires, aircraft rescue, emergency medical response and other emergency incidents;
- (d) the consideration of best practice, including relevant international standards;
- (e) the mechanisms and criteria for the review of the provisions of safety standards for the provision of rescue and firefighting services, if any;
- (f) a review of Air Services Australia policy and administration of aviation rescue and firefighting services;
- (g) The effectiveness and independence of the Regulator, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), to uphold aviation rescue and firefighting safety standards;
- (h) the impact on Australia's national and international reputation and aviation safety record as a result of any lowering of aviation rescue and firefighting services; and
- (i) any other related matters.

This inquiry is an opportunity for the union to make submissions and to protect and improve community and firefighter safety in relation to aviation fire services. We welcome the announcement.

## **UFU State Council**

The next meeting of State Council is scheduled for Thursday, 13 December 2018 at 09:30 hours at the UFU office. Members are welcome to attend meetings of State Council as observers; please contact the union office on 8352 7211 if you would like to do so.

***It would be appreciated if you would ensure this Word Back is printed out and placed on the Station noticeboard if possible; this will enable those who do not access electronic devices to keep up with the latest information.***

In solidarity

**Max Adlam**

**UFU Secretary**