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Working globally for a toxic free future

HIGH LEVELS OF CONTAMINATION KEPT FROM RESIDENTS FOR EIGHT YEARS

The National Toxics Network is calling for an immediate and independent follow-up investigation into groundwater contamination at the Gold Coast regional airport. Data from AirServices Australia* just released under Freedom of Information shows that high levels of groundwater contamination at the airport were known about as far back as 2008.

“While only four samples were taken from around the Gold Coast airport, the results were extremely alarming and should have prompted further action at the time. PFOS concentrations ranged between 110 µg/L and 470 µg/L while PFOA concentrations were between 4 µg/L and 51 µg/L” said Dr Lloyd Smith, Senior Adviser National Toxics Network.

“While it’s unlikely the residents around the airport drink their groundwater, the levels are many hundreds of times higher than Australian interim drinking water guidelines and thousands of times higher than the US EPA guidelines. We are concerned that they may pose a risk for those using the water for vegetable gardens or even children playing under the hose.”

Animal studies have long shown the risks associated with these chemicals while recent human population studies have linked PFOS and PFOA with thyroid disease, immune suppression, reproductive impacts and cancer.

“AirServices Australia were aware of the contamination eight years ago yet have not carried out the much needed follow-up investigations to assess how far the contamination has spread nor have they warned the community not to use the groundwater for drinking, irrigation or feeding stock until further investigation,” said Dr Lloyd Smith.

“The failure to notify surrounding residents of the contamination violates a legal requirement of the Australian government to release all available information on persistent organic pollutants like PFOS to the Australian community under the Stockholm Convention” she said.

“We don’t know how many airports have high levels of contamination. A priority investigation of potential contamination at all commercial airports around Australia is well overdue and requires independent national oversight and remediation where necessary..”

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* Airservices Australia is an Australian Government owned corporation, responsible for providing safe, secure, efficient and environmentally responsible services to the aviation industry.