

The PFAS Health Study: Data Linkage Study

Summary

This data linkage study is one component of The Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Health Study: Phase II, which is investigating the exposure to and potential health effects of PFAS in areas of known contamination in the communities of Williamtown in New South Wales, Oakey in Queensland and Katherine in the Northern Territory, Australia.

The primary goal of the data linkage study is to examine whether adverse health outcomes potentially associated with PFAS exposure are more common among people who have lived in the PFAS Investigation and Management Areas of Williamtown, Oakey and Katherine (exposed), than among people who have lived outside these areas (non-exposed), after accounting for sociodemographic characteristics.

The study will use linked routinely-collected data to estimate rates¹ of candidate health outcomes in the exposed and non-exposed populations and compare them, adjusting for sociodemographic characteristics including age, sex, socioeconomic status and remoteness. Candidate outcomes are those potentially associated with PFAS exposure, as identified from a systematic review of the literature. In addition, the study will investigate selected health outcomes for which there is no known evidence of an association with PFAS exposure—referred to as control outcomes.

The data linkage study is expected to be completed by December 2020.

We expect the study to produce knowledge that will assist community members in understanding the impact on their health, if any, of living in a PFAS Investigation and Management Area, and that will assist policy makers in responding to PFAS contamination issues.

¹ Most outcomes are measured as rates, although some outcomes are measured in terms of prevalence and a few as continuous measures. In this context, the term “rates” will be used for brevity, rather than referring to all outcome types separately each time.