

Endorsed Minutes

10 December 2015

Meeting:	Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)	Date: 10 December 2015
Location:	Newcastle Airport Board Room	Time: 4:00 to 6:20pm
Number:	1508	
Chairperson:	Jodie Calvert Asst Regional Coordinator Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	
Secretariat:	Aaron Spadaro Regional Liaison Officer DPC	
Attendees:	Scot MacDonald Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter & Central Coast	
	Barry Buffier CEO and Chair Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	
	Adam Gilligan Manager Hunter Region EPA	
	Jeremy Hillman Senior Stakeholder & Communications Officer EPA	
	Ian Lyall Manager Aquaculture Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries)	
	Mike McIntosh Director Planning and Environment Port Stephens Council	
	Brigadier Noel Beutell Department of Defence	
	Air Vice Marshal Greg Evans Department of Defence	
	Vicki Pearce Estate and Infrastructure Group Department of Defence	
	Stacey Hannon Estate and Infrastructure Group Department of Defence	
	Lyndsay Clout President, Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group	
	Rhianna Gorfine Co-convenor, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group	
	Don Burgoyne NSW Farmer's Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer	
	Robert Gauta Manager, Commercial Fisherman's Coop	
	Cornelius Disselkoen Maria's Vegetable Farm Community Member	
	Phil Blanch Community Member & Fisher's Representative	
Apologies	Prof David Durrheim Director Health Protection Hunter New England Local Health District	

Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council

Mark Donaghey | Environmental Remediation Program | Department of Defence

Glenda Briggs | Regional Manager | Department of Primary Industries

Cain Gorfine | President, Williamstown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

Andrew Smith | CEO Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council | Community Member

Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamstown Salt Ash Flood Group

Mark Salm | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1508-1	Prepare an approvals process flow chart used by Defence for the NACC approval.	Defence	ASAP
1508-2	Prepare a chronology of dewatering activities undertaken to date and proposed.	Defence	ASAP
1508-3	Add Defence compensation contact information to FAQs and to Council to support business survey distribution.	EPA, PSC	ASAP
1508-4	Liaise with DHS on business loss review period required by fishers	DPC	ASAP
1508-5	Distribute contact details for Salvation Army assistance	DPC	ASAP
1508-6	Discuss joined up communication approach facilitated by new EPA on-ground community and stakeholder representative	EPA, Defence, DPC	16 Dec 2015
1508-7	EPA to distribute media release on action against Hydromet to CRG when available	EPA, DPC	11 Dec 2015
1508-8	Liaise with Salt Ash PS principal to determine appropriate representation on CRG	DPC	ASAP
1508-9	Reissue FAQs including information to allow discrete contact with referral services.	EPA	ASAP
1508-10	Pursue ongoing mental health supports for community members.	DPC	ASAP

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1508-11	Report back on the purpose of the detention basin adjacent to the Mercure Hotel site the next CRG meeting	Council	ASAP

Meeting minutes

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
2. Endorsement of Minutes	Endorsed, noting minor clarifications from Defence and NSW Department of Primary Industries	Noted
3. Defence presentation	<p>Brigadier Noel Beutell from the Department of Defence provided an overview of the four major base development projects proposed at RAAF Williamtown:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Air Combat Capability (NACC), incorporating new Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, pilot and maintenance training facility, operational squadron facility, maintenance and support facilities, aprons, runway, taxiway extensions and associated infrastructure. Managing contractor is Lend Lease. Project management team and contract managers through Lend lease. Works commenced in January 2015, scheduled completion is 2022. 2. RAAF Base Stage 2 development, comprising multi-story office accommodation for 950 personnel, consolidating a series of disparate officer locations on base into a single facility. Redundant facilities are to be demolished. 3. Upgrade of base engineering services, including connection of the base to the Williamtown Waste Water Transfer Scheme, decommissioning of the on-base sewage treatment plant and associated ponds, upgrades to base vehicular entry points and local traffic management. Leightons is the managing contractor. Planning phase approval has been received to date. 4. Roll out of Air Traffic Management, Control System Facilities Infrastructure, including a new tower and associated facilities at RAAF Williamtown, as part of a nation-wide rollout. This project awaits Commonwealth approval through the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. Subject to approval, construction is due to start mid-late 2017. <p>Details of projects including statements of evidence, committee recommendations and site plans are available through the Public Works Committee (PWC) website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Works (current inquiries) • www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Works/completed_inquiries (completed inquiries) <p>Community representatives sought assurance the PWC are clear in their understanding of the contamination investigation. Defence</p>	

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	<p>assured the CRG of the Committee's familiarity with issue, particularly given Sharon Claydon MP's membership.</p> <p>Community representatives enquired as to whether PFOS and PFOA are referred to in the environmental assessment documentation, given the timing of its preparation. Defence suggested contaminants generally are assessed, but the detail is delivered for actual on-ground work through later approval stages. Site tour proposed on 17 December for the EPA and Expert Panel will go through the scope of works and mitigation strategy in detail.</p> <p>Community representatives questioned whether land based impacts were covered off through the NACC EIS. Defence set out that the strategic business case development is only based on 5-10% design, not a full investigation of all environmental factors and contaminants. Contamination, flora and fauna impacts were primarily based on aircraft flying activity and patterns. All new information is fed into the analysis of future stages of detailed environmental assessment as it becomes available.</p> <p>EPA suggests a process flowchart for Federal environmental approvals is needed to help with community information.</p> <p>NSW DPI asked whether there are statutory responsibilities for linking in with state agencies though Commonwealth EIS process. Defence indicated this is not strictly mandatory, but still worked closely with Council on stormwater issues, including the six new detention basins proposed, and funding to assist with broader area stormwater issues (eg Lemon Tree Passage Road). Defence adhered to State requirements in its proposed connection to the Williamstown Waste Water Transfer Scheme, and has placed significant focus on community consultation throughout the EIS process.</p> <p>EPA enquired about dewatering activity on base. Defence confirmed its commencement in August, but ceased while the purification plants were installed. Two plants are on base on site treating extracted water before being returned to the ground, without increasing the rate of water leaving the base. A simple, diagrammatic chronology to help clarify and communicate dewatering activities on base is suggested.</p> <p>Defence highlighted there are several remediation options that have been assessed to date as being unsuitable. Defence has worked with CRC care since 2005 on on-base contaminants, and most recently with Dr Ravi Naidu. Various degrees of success. Large scale remediation is being trialled in the US on an Air Force base involving an aquifer, but there are no reported outcomes yet.</p> <p>Brigadier Beutell emphasised all soil extracted remains on base, with the only exception being when asbestos contaminated. Only certified clean fill is imported onto the base. Stockpiling of soil on base is occurring in accordance with approvals using top and bottom membranes.</p>	<p>Defence to prepare an approvals process flow chart used by Defence for the NACC approval.</p> <p>Defence to prepare a chronology of dewatering activities undertaken to date and proposed.</p>

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	<p>EPA asked about plans involving Lake Cochrane. Defence indicated the stormwater design solution does not involve the Lake, rather Moore's Drain. Defence looking at investigation of long term solutions, early next year or preliminary options. EPA suggested the CSG industry has expertise in storing contaminants. Defence will tap into managing contractor resources for that expertise.</p> <p>Community representatives asked whether is it realistic to expect PFOS/PFOA to no longer impact surrounding waterways. Defence indicated there is no immediate answer, which is frustrating to the community, but Defence practices on base mean that are not making the issue any worse. Source areas are a particular study focus, which commenced in mid-November.</p> <p>EPA highlighted that CRG has discussed measures to restrict surface flow and fresh water diversion, and stopping contaminated water leaving the base. Defence has assembled a team to focus solely on this challenge. Working toward having options in first part of next year. Looking also at significance of groundwater upwelling and likelihood of cross contamination. Defence is trying to avoid doing cosmetic changes or just transferring the problem.</p> <p>Community asked why investigations did not start in May when studies produced for Defence first notified of the issue. Defence noted the worst of the problem was caused 20-40 years ago. This raised significant community member concern over how far back the local community has been exposed to the contaminants. They want to know whether this is the front, middle or end of the contamination concerns.</p> <p>The Human Health Risk Assessment is due in June 2016 will allow Defence to understand forward timeframes for remediation. Hydrological modelling is a key input, but Defence is taking the time to get it right.</p> <p>The need for improved communication out of Defence to CRG, community and seafood producers was re-emphasised. EPA emphasised the need for the Expert Panel, and that resources are being put in, and their commitment to working together with Defence.</p>	
4. Actions List	<p>Compensation and financial assistance</p> <p>Defence advised that any business or individual claims against the Commonwealth for compensation may be submitted by email to dl.specialcounsel@defence.gov.au or by mail to Defence Special Counsel, Defence Legal, Department of Defence, CP2-4-061, Campbell Park Offices ACT 2600</p>	<p>Add compensation contact information to FAQs and to Council business survey distribution.</p>

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	NSW advised that DHS are unable to alter the 3 month period for fisher's reporting their businesses losses.	DPC to liaise with DHS on business loss review period
	<p>Measuring flow-on business impacts</p> <p>Council noted the draft surveys have been prepared and will be circulated next week.</p>	
	<p>Communication of Defence forward sampling program</p> <p>Defence committed to making the Sampling and Quality Plan publically available, but may not be a useful document given its technical nature. An executive summary is proposed. Availability of biota sampling labs was noted as a limiting factor on speed of testing. The community again emphasised need for milestones and certainty around a forward plan. EPA noted the Expert Panel expectation for milestone planning to achieve HHRA delivery timeframes.</p>	
	<p>Development site dewatering and soil movement</p> <p>EPA advised of a meeting held with Council to discuss development assessment and monitoring activities, including dewatering and soil movement requirements. EPA is working with Council to develop standard requirements for dewatering and dust control on development sites. Council has commenced referring new development applications in the investigation zone to the EPA. Council has also commenced notification of sites within investigation area on Section 149(5) certificates.</p>	
	<p>Salvation Army assistance – key contact</p> <p>DPC to get advice on who best to contact within Salvation Army. Will be distributed.</p>	DPC to distribute contact details for Salvation Army assistance
	<p>EPA letter to Defence on containment</p> <p>Defence advised that they have now responded to the EPA's letter regarding containment on base, including requests for site access and construction management plan details. Further discussion on these topics will take place on base on Thursday 17 December.</p>	
	<p>Premier's meeting with CRG</p> <p>The Parliamentary Secretary thanked the CRG for the frank discussion and clear messages given to the Premier. DPC and EPA have since provided assistance to the Premier in preparation for his conversation with the Prime Minister on the issue. Hoping for feedback and next steps soon. Report submitted by community representatives to the Premier was presented to Defence for consideration. EPA noted the meeting was very beneficial in garnering further financial support for the NSW Government investigation as well.</p>	

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5. Agency Reports (by exception)	NSW Environmental Protection Authority EPA noted the value of the CRG in the community communication space. Recognising there is more to do, the EPA will recruit on-ground communications and stakeholder specialist to assist locally with the contamination investigation. This also provides opportunity for Defence to coordinate its communications with consolidated messages in partnership with the EPA	EPA, Defence and DPC to discuss joined-up communication approach
	EPA notified of separate action being taken against Hydromet at Tomago to require the removal of contaminants. Sediment traces of selenium were found in drains in the vicinity of the facility. There is no suggestion of impacts on the Hunter River, nor for community safety, but action is being taken to remedy this highly localised detection including requirements for more assessment.	EPA to distribute media release to CRG when available.
	Department of Primary Industries 10 NSW DPI staff are involved in sampling activity and another staff member working in the laboratory. NSW DPI is working toward completion of Port Stephens and Hunter River sampling before end 2015, using contracted fishers in the Hunter River. Sampling is also occurring off shore in Stockton Bight to understand potential spread of contaminants from onshore waterways. Sampling in Wallis Lake and Shoalhaven/Crookhaven continues as control environments. Testing of eels and Australian bass in Grahamstown weir will also be tested, but as a lower priority at this stage.	
	Results of school prawn testing have been placed on the NSW DPI website.	
	Training support is being investigated for fishers during their down time, and a two-day function for fishers' partners will take place in January 2016.	
	Council is leading a response to local brand damage impacts, in collaboration with NSW DPI and the local industry. A Destination Port Stephens campaign proposal has been drafted and will be executed over the coming weeks. NSW DPI is also continuing with signage improvements and compliance work.	
	Fishers met again on 10 December with new resolutions to seek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a meeting with the Expert Panel • retesting of prawns, as point-in-time sampling necessitates need for resampling/retesting. 	
	Fishing industry representatives advised the Professional Fisherman's Association NSW will submit and appear before the Senate Committee and appear before Senate Committee along with Rob Gauta and another fisher representative (TBC). NSW Farmers Association will also make a submission, with Jaime Lovell likely to appear before the Committee.	

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6. Community feedback and issues (by exception)	The CRG noted correspondence received from residents seeking advice on the disposal of empty drinking water bottles supplied by Defence. DPC has circulated information on Council contacts for arranging collection. This information is also included with test result letters by Defence.	
	The CRG noted the request for rainwater tank testing at Salt Ash Public School has been actioned. Initial tests show the test indicates a nil detection. Further monitoring at the school is proposed.	
	The Salt Ash Public School P&C Committee has also requested to be a member of the CRG. CRG agreed to approach the school's principal for advice on suitable member.	DPC to liaise with school principal to determine appropriate representation on CRG
	The next community drop-in event is moved forward to Wednesday 16 December. Hunter New England Health, NSW DPI, EPA and Defence have again agreed to participate. Commitment from community and industry CRG representatives is sought. Red Cross and other support services will also be available.	
	Fisher's representatives highlighted that fishers are generally too proud to approach charities.	EPA to reissue FAQs including information to allow discrete contact with referral services.
	The elected representatives meeting raised need for ongoing GP and mental health supports.	DPC to pursue what ongoing mental health supports could be made available.
	The CRG noted the investigation area outline in marked in pink – discussed at previous meetings – has now been removed.	
	Community members enquired about the purpose of the detention basin in the south-eastern extent of the Airport site, adjacent to the Mercure Hotel site.	Council to report back to the next CRG meeting
7. Other business	Nil	
8. Future meetings	Thursday 21 January, 4-6pm, Newcastle Airport Boardroom.	

Meeting closed 6.20pm

Next meeting 4:00 to 6:00 pm Thursday 10 December at Newcastle Airport Boardroom.