

## Endorsed Minutes 22 September 2016

**Meeting:** Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)

**Date:** 22 September 2016

**Location:** Newcastle Airport Boardroom      Time: 3.30pm to 5.25pm

**Number:** 1614

**Chairperson:** Jodie Calvert | Principal Coordinator | Department of Premier and Cabinet

**Secretariat:** Cheryl Clarke | Senior Coordination Officer | Department of Premier and Cabinet

**Attendees:** Judy Harwood | JC Harwood Consulting P/L  
 Marcus Jeffery | Estate and Infrastructure | Department of Defence  
 Air Commodore Craig Heap | Department of Defence  
 Vicki Pearce | A/Director Environmental Remediation Programs | Department of Defence  
 Sarah Davis | Project Officer | Department of Defence  
 Rob Hogan | Manager Major Projects – PFAS Coordination | EPA  
 Lauren Bourke | Senior Operations Officer | EPA  
 Evelina Hendry | Senior Stakeholder & Communications Officer | EPA  
 Kathy Kent | Department of Human Services  
 Glenda Briggs | Regional Manager | Department of Primary Industries  
 Mike McIntosh | Port Stephens Council  
 Robert Hamilton | Community Member and Fisher's Representative  
 Lyndsay Clout | Fullerton Cove Resident  
 Nick Marshall | Salt Ash Community First  
 Kim Smith | Salt Ash Community First  
 Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group  
 Robert Gauta | Manager, Commercial Fishermen's Coop

**Apologies** Scot MacDonald | Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter and Central Coast  
 Dr David Durrheim | Hunter New England Local Health District  
 Don Burgoyne | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer  
 Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council  
 Cornelius Disselkoen | Maria's Vegetable Farm | Community Member  
 Andrew Smith | CEO Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council | Community Member  
 Mark Salm | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer  
 Cain Gorfine | Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group  
 Rhianna Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group  
 Phil Blanch | Community Member and Fisher's Representative

## Endorsed Minutes

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Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1614-1	Hunter Water and Defence to present on water reticulation program at CRG October meeting	Defence/Hunter Water	20.10.16
1614-2	Defence to refer community comments on the Epidemiological Study and voluntary blood testing program to Cmwth Department of Health. Issues include: engage with community on design prior to finalising the design; do not restrict to people within the investigation area only; include a radius outside the IA eg 1-2 kms	Defence	29.9.16
1614-3	Defence to try and find out details of the blood testing program and raise community concerns around access	Defence	29.9.16
1614-4	Jodie Calvert and Justin Hamilton to discuss bank/valuation issues out of session	DPC	29.9.16
1614-5	Marcus Jeffery to seek examples of loan issues from Nick Marshall to elevate to the Commonwealth Inter-departmental Committee on PFAS	Defence	29.9.16
1614-6	Kathy Kent to identify whether there is funding available to assist businesses (other than fishers) whose business has been impacted by contamination and stigma associated with area.	DHS	29.9.16
1614-7	Mike McIntosh, Rob Hogan and Justin Hamilton to review DA details to determine whether condition is above what would normally be requested by Council	EPA/PSC	29.9.16
1614-8	To advise the Expert Panel of the community's dissatisfaction with the decision to not conduct air monitoring.	EPA	29.9.16
1614-9	Defence to clarify their position on air monitoring following discussion with Dr Roger Drew	Defence	6.10.16

# Endorsed Minutes

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## Meeting minutes

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### 1. Endorsement of Minutes – 8 September 2016

Action items 1612 – 2/3 to clarify that Defence has agreed to fund samples in drains as part of the weed removal program but information is not yet known on the number of samples.

Action item 1612-15 to clarify that the reference is to surface water coming off the RAAF Base.

Minutes of 8 September endorsed with amendments.

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### 2. Actions List

1613-5 Lindsay advised that as the information belongs to the community group, its release will require a decision to be made at the next committee meeting.

1613-13 Vicki Pearce advised that a document will be collated in response to the SACF document. However, much of the information is likely to be addressed by the US technology being examined to determine its potential to be situated on Moors drain to treat surface water coming off the Base. Defence will provide updates when more information becomes available.

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### 3. CRG Roadmap

The CRG reviewed the roadmap and updated the following action items:

- 2.4 Qualitative Ecological Risk Assessment – completion date to be confirmed.
- 4.3.2 Establishment of a mental health awareness and stress management initiative by Defence is completed.
- 4.6 Appointment of a Department of Human Services Community Liaison Officer is completed.
- 4.7.5 Special additional consideration in regards to the NSW commercial fishing business adjustment program timeframes and provisions is now in place.
- 4.8.3 Coxswain training for fishers to be delivered by December 2016.
- 5.2.1 Initial trials on soil and groundwater remediation are ongoing.
- 6.2.1 Independent review of EnHealth interim guidelines is completed. The interim guidelines will be reviewed by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

The chair requested Defence and EPA review the wording around action items relating to long term management strategies.

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### 4. Discussion Items

#### 4.1 CRG Review

The Chair introduced Judy Harwood as the successful consultant for the review of the Community Reference Group. Judy will review the role and effectiveness of the CRG in communicating with the community and identify ways for improvement. Community engagement will occur through a variety of ways including interviews with CRG community members and agencies' community liaison officers, focus groups and a survey across the broader community. Information on the review will be circulated to the community through letter-box drop and email to the AECOM stakeholder list. All information will be de-identified and treated confidentially and only used for the purpose of the report. The community expressed concern that

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# Endorsed Minutes

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residents are fatigued with talking and not receiving answers. The Chair emphasised that the review will focus on the role of the CRG and its effectiveness eg what issues should sit within the forum and how we can improve on current communication practices. The CRG is not a decision-making body. The review will also consider the application to the CRG of the NSW Public Service Commission's Framework for NSW Government Boards and Committees. Justin Hamilton recommended benchmarking other formal community reference groups. A process to progress the recommendations will be developed once the recommendations are known.

## 4.2 Interim Protocol for CRG Business

The Chair noted the interim protocol recently introduced will maximise discussion time at CRG meetings. It will be a transition arrangement pending the CRG review outcomes. A community question/answer table that itemises the questions received out of session with agencies responses has also been developed and will be circulated with meeting papers. Any followup from an agency response should be directed to the agency concerned with a copy to the Chair and Secretariat. Nick Marshall requested the community has notice of agenda items and copies of presentations prior to the meeting, where possible.

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## 5. Information Items

### 5.1 Federal Government commitments

#### 5.1.1 Epidemiological Study/Blood Testing

Defence advised that the Commonwealth Department of Health (DoH) has commissioned an epidemiological study to examine the potential health effects resulting from PFAS exposure in the affected communities of Williamstown and Oakey. The National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University is leading the study which is expected to run for approximately 2½ yrs. The DoH will conduct public consultations in both communities in the near future. Defence confirmed that its interim arrangements to reimburse costs for blood testing do not provide Defence or DoH with automatic access to community test results. Community raised several concerns around the study and voluntary blood testing program including the need for the commonwealth government to engage with community on the program design prior to finalising the design; to not restrict the program to people within the investigation area only. For example, the residents of Willow Lane who are viewed as being situated outside of the investigation area but are subjected to contaminated water from drainage overflow. The community suggested inclusion of a radius of 1-2kms outside the investigation area.

***Defence to refer community comments on the Epidemiological Study and voluntary blood testing program to Cmwth Department of Health***

Community also raised concerns around lack of information on the voluntary blood testing program and in particular access arrangements. Nick Marshall asked that the community be engaged around the design. Defence has no further information but will seek further details from DoH.

***Defence to try and find out details of the blood testing program and raise community concerns around access***

## 5.1.2 Water Reticulation

Defence confirmed that contact has been made with Hunter Water to progress discussions around the Federal Government's commitment of \$3.5m to connect properties in the investigation area to town water. In response to Lindsay's question, Defence confirmed that the funds also apply to residents outside but adjacent to the investigation area. The Chair noted that Hunter Water is examining options around private plumbing connections for consideration by Defence.

Justin Hamilton noted that whilst access to water reticulation within the investigation area will improve the risk level in valuation certificates, the entire suburb of Fullerton Cove (and postcode 2318) has been impacted by the position of the banks with residents outside the investigation area not entitled to funded water reticulation. The chair noted that more work is required on the bank lending issue.

***Jodie Calvert and Justin Hamilton to discuss bank/valuation issues out of session***

## 5.2 Feedback from Community Liaison Officers

Evelina Hendry advised that a stakeholder management strategy will be developed to ensure that both the DHS and EPA Community Liaison Officers are not duplicating their activities and are adding value to the community. A plan will be presented at a future meeting.

## 5.3 Fishers

### 5.3.1 Training – Coxswain Course

NSW DPI is providing 6 fully subsidised opportunities for Coxswains course (Grade 1, Near Coastal) which is normally \$1500 between 14th - 30 November 2016. This will be funded from the NSW DPI budget. An Expression of Interest has been issued and priority will be given to commercial fishers directly impacted by Williamstown closures (ie: those receiving debt waivers).

### 5.3.2 Financial Support – Centrelink issues

Kathy Kent confirmed that the government loans framework to support communities and businesses recover from natural disasters is legislatively based and is unable to be applied to Williamstown. Marcus Jeffery noted that Defence will re-submit the issue to the Commonwealth Inter-departmental committee on PFAS for further consideration.

***Marcus Jeffery to seek specific examples of loan issues from Nick Marshall to elevate to the cmwth IDC on PFAS for consideration.***

Centrelink staff were provided with further training on 20 September to ensure they were current with information for fishers. Customer Service Officers and social workers were also in attendance to obtain a better understanding of the overall situation. Community questioned whether the income subsidy could relate to other businesses that have been impacted either directly or indirectly through stigma associated with the area. Kathy confirmed that the income subsidy relates to fishers only but will make enquiries regarding whether there are any other funding opportunities for businesses other than fishers.

***Kathy Kent to identify whether there is funding available to assist businesses (other than fishers) whose business has been impacted***

*by contamination and stigma associated with area.*

### **5.3.3 Commercial Fishing reforms special exemptions**

Special exemptions to commercial fishing reforms have been announced (prawners have been excluded) plus an extended time frame for decisions.

### **5.3.4 Fishing Closures - review by Expert Panel**

DPI advised that they remain cognisant of fishers increasing concern re time frame and remain committed to talking to fishers before any public announcements. The Expert Panel is currently reviewing the closures and a decision is imminent. It is expected that a meeting will be held with Fishers on 27 September and an announcement is expected later that day. Robert Hamilton noted that fishers need confirmation on 27<sup>th</sup> so that decisions can be made around buying shares.

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## **6 General Business**

### **6.1 Impost on property owners - Future Fund**

Justin Hamilton noted the reality of the first impost on property owners and developers in the area due to contamination. Justin cited a condition placed on a housing extension project for the owner to pay for surface water, groundwater and soil testing. This example supports the community's request for the establishment of a Future Fund to assist community and business to fund investigations into the future. There was discussion around whether the specific DA condition was over and above what would normally be required in a DA of that type. Defence advised that any person who has been requested by a third party to conduct PFAS sampling should contact the AECOM Hotline on 1800 011 433 to make arrangements for such testing which will be funded by Defence. Mike McIntosh advised that the Contaminated Land Register controls what actions can be taken and it changes the way a development can occur. Lauren Bourke noted that EPA can provide advice to make sure that controls are appropriate and cost effective for smaller developments but it is not a planning regulator. EPA noted the difference between small and large developments relate to the volume of contamination moving off-site.

*Mike McIntosh, Rob Hogan and Justin Hamilton to review DA details to determine whether condition is above what would normally be requested by Council*

### **6.2 Foam/air monitoring**

Nick Marshall referred to his email regarding the foam located in drains and becoming airborne. He advised that community feel it is not dissolving into the ground and want it moved. EPA advised that advice from the Expert Panel is that the volume is small and does not present a risk. Nick again asked for an air test to be conducted. The Chair noted that air monitoring question has been discussed and answered by EPA on advice provided by the Williamstown Contamination Expert Panel. The Chair noted that SACF does not accept the response but considers the CRG is unable to progress the issue any further.

*Advise the Expert Panel of the community's dissatisfaction with the decision to not conduct air monitoring.*

## Endorsed Minutes

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*Defence to clarify their position on air monitoring following discussion with Dr Roger Drew.*

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- 7. Future meetings:** The meeting of 4 October 2016 will be cancelled due to staff absences.  
Meeting closed: 5.25pm  
Community representatives remained for discussion with Judy Harwood on the CRG Review.

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**Next meeting:** The next meeting will be held on 20 October 2016 from 3.30pm to 6.00pm.