

Endorsed Minutes

4 February 2016

Meeting:	Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)	Date: 4 February 2016
Location:	Newcastle Airport Board Room	Time: 3.45 to 6:15pm
Number:	1602	
Chairperson:	Jodie Calvert Asst Regional Coordinator Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	
Secretariat:	Cheryl Clarke Regional Liaison Officer DPC	
Attendees:	Scot MacDonald Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter & Central Coast	
	Mary O'Kane AC NSW Chief Scientist	
	Will Glamore Expert Panel Water Working Group	
	Chris Armstrong Office of the NSW Chief Scientist	
	Adam Gilligan Manager Hunter Region Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	
	Jeremy Hillman Senior Stakeholder & Communications Officer EPA	
	Glenda Briggs Regional Manager Department of Primary Industries	
	Joshua Foster Department of Primary Industries	
	Doug Ferrell Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries	
	Prof David Durrheim Director Health Protection Hunter New England Local Health District	
	Air Commodore Craig Heap Department of Defence	
	James McLachlan Department of Defence	
	Vicki Pearce Department of Defence	
	Steve Peios Department of Defence (<i>observer</i>)	
	Adeline Cheah Department of Defence (<i>observer</i>)	
	Sarah Davis Department of Defence (<i>observer</i>)	
	Robert Gauta Manager, Commercial Fisherman's Coop	
	Don Burgoyne NSW Farmer's Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer	

Phil Blanch | Community Member and Fisher's Representative

Rhianna Gorfine | Co-convenor, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

Lyndsay Clout | President, Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group

Alison Kenny | Salt Ash Public School P&C

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

Apologies

Air Vice Marshal Greg Evans | Department of Defence

Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council

Cornelius Disselkoen | Maria's Vegetable Farm | Community Member

Cain Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

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

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

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1602-1	EPA to advise Defence on community requests for more detailed data in Defence letter	EPA	ASAP
1602-2	Defence to clarify its position and processes for the community to obtain bottled water/tank water and prepare an FAQ document	Defence	ASAP
1602-3	EPA to upload FAQ on community access to bottled water	EPA	ASAP
1602-4	Health to provide advice on verifying the quality of Water Carters	Health	ASAP
1602-5	Council to clarify recycling bin arrangements for inclusion in the FAQ EPA website	Council	ASAP
1602-6	Defence to provide feedback on funding plumbing costs for community to connect to reticulated water.	Defence	18.2.16
1602-7	Defence to provide detailed information on containment wells program	Defence	ASAP

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1602-8	Defence to provide project plan of key activities and timelines to the Chair for dissemination to CRG	Defence	ASAP
1602-9	Defence to circulate a fact sheet providing information on the 19.1.16 contamination to the CRG via the Chair.	Defence	ASAP
1602-10	DPC to arrange teleconference on fishers financial assistance issues	DPC	5.2.16

Meeting minutes

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
2. Endorsement of Minutes	Endorsed	Noted
3. Actions List	<p>FAQs</p> <p>The reissue of FAQs to include information for discrete contact with referral services is outstanding.</p> <p>Investigation area boundaries</p> <p>EPA advised that a further six samples have been obtained from the drainage areas and the results will be submitted to the next meeting of the Water Working Group (WWG) on 10 February 2016. The WWG already has a conceptual model of the drainage system but will consider any additional data to assess whether the investigation area boundary requires amendment.</p> <p>RAAF base containment strategy</p> <p>Defence advised that their focus is on remediation as there is still no solution on containment.</p> <p>Three month assessment period</p> <p>DPC contacted DHS regarding the assessment period. DHS has acknowledged the issue but no solution has been provided.</p> <p>Fishers – mortgage stress</p> <p>DPC advised that AVM Evans has agreed to escalate the issue of immediate support outside of the long term compensation process.</p> <p>Meeting between Premier and Prime Minister</p> <p>The Parliamentary Secretary contacted the Premier's Office and was advised that conversations had occurred but was not provided with details of the meeting. Lyndsay Clout will write to the Premier seeking details of meeting outcomes.</p> <p>Locations for community engagement</p> <p>Previous community suggestions included Salt Ash Shops and the Prawners Club. Any other suggestions to be forwarded directly to Jeremy.</p>	

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
	<p>Defence sewerage arrangements</p> <p>Defence tabled a copy of a letter dated 6 January 2016 to the Editor, Newcastle Herald, which seeks to correct factual errors in the newspaper's article 'Pipe Block' on 4 January 2016. Defence reiterated that they have not refused to sign a Trade Waste Agreement and there have been ongoing negotiations between Defence and Hunter Water. Defence anticipates the conclusion of negotiations and execution of the Trade Waste Agreement in February 2016.</p> <p>DPI – media releases</p> <p>DPI confirmed that the media release process is across all Fishers Associations</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Expert Panel Update</p> <p>Ms O'Kane advised that the first Expert Panel meeting for 2016 had occurred that day following a site inspection of the base and a meeting with Fishers' representatives. Ms O'Kane noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NSW Government has funded a new mass spectrometer to assist Defence in completing the health risk assessment. The EP has been focusing questions to Defence on remediation and containment matters. However, the EP has experienced difficulties with obtaining data from Defence. • In order to expedite progress, the EP and Defence have agreed to meet regularly to improve communication and data provision. • The major focus for the Expert Panel is on: the human health risk assessment; water sampling to fully understand the size of the contamination and impact; and water modelling. • The EP has requested advice from the Department of Planning on the proposal for Sand mining. • The EP is concerned about the fishers and their families. • There is a misconception by Fishers that the contamination in the sediment of the river is flushed out by floods. Professor O'Kane noted that it is difficult to make a judgement and the EP will write to Defence regarding the need for better messaging. <p>There was discussion with Dr Will Glamore around the hydrology model and drainage network.</p> <p>Mr Clout gave a briefing on the connectivity of the drains across Fullerton Cove and Williamtown areas. Dr Glamore clarified the groundwater gradients in the Williamtown and Fullerton Cove areas. He also discussed that each of the drains in the area is either 'groundwater giving' or 'groundwater receiving'. That is, some drains supply water from the drain to the aquifer, while others receive water from the aquifer into the drain. It is expected that the</p>	

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
	<p>Fullerton Cove drains are groundwater receiving, and as a consequence, elevated levels of PFOS in those drains is not expected to flow in to the aquifer below.</p> <p>Mr Glamore advised that the area operates according to standard flood plain hydrology model. The community accepted the model but expressed concerns around the drains receiving surface water and the need for containment.</p>	
5.	<p>Fishers Concerns</p> <p>The community is concerned with the Defence compensation pathway as it is costly to engage legal representation. Defence should be simplifying the process not making it difficult or adversarial. Rob Gauta met with Defence Legal and will work on a template for fishers. Fishers can submit it to Defence directly but it was noted that it would be ideal to talk to solicitors to ensure a fair deal. DPC noted that it would be beneficial if Defence had someone locally to talk with community rather than in Canberra. Defence is endeavouring to have a legal representative attend the next CRG meeting.</p>	
6. Agency Reports (by exception)	<p>Defence</p> <p>Sampling progress – as at 29 January 2016, there have been 378 samples with 34 detections comprising bores 204/29, water tanks 150/2, swimming pools 20/2 and surface water 4/1. Community is seeking more detailed data information in the results letter from Defence.</p> <p>Community asked for clarification of Defence policy in providing bottled water particularly when there is no detection. Defence advised that people within the investigation area who contact Defence will receive bottled water. Community also noted that tankered water would be a better option for some community members. Defence agreed that this strategy is being considered which would include a strict cleaning and testing regime to ensure no contamination.</p> <p>CRG noted that information on the process for community to obtain bottled water would be helpful and this could be made available as a FAQ through the EPA and community websites. Further information on the proposed strategy for filling water tanks is also sought from the community. Health advised that there is a quality assurance process monitored by Health that Water Carters Trucks must meet.</p> <p>It was noted that Council has offered additional recycling bins and</p>	<p>EPA to advise Defence on community requests for more detailed data in Defence letter</p> <p>Defence to clarify its position and processes for the community to obtain bottled water/tank water for inclusion in an FAQ</p> <p>EPA to upload FAQ on community access to bottled water Health to provide advice on verifying the quality of Water Carters</p> <p>Council to clarify additional recycling bin</p>

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
	this could be included in a broader FAQs document on bottled water arrangements.	arrangements
	The community noted that some residents will require plumbing works to be able to connect to reticulated water supply and this should be funded by Defence. Defence to provide feedback at the next meeting.	Defence to provide feedback on funding plumbing to connect to reticulated water.
	Community requested information on plans for containment on base. Defence advised that there are plans to build six containment areas which have been approved by Port Stephens Council. Community noted a flowchart had previously been provided to the CRG but it did not provide sufficient details or timelines of the planned works.	Defence to provide detailed information on containment wells program
	EPA noted that the EP and EPA will become more involved in a whole of Government solution on drains.	
	Defence is still considering industry proposals for containment and remediation but anticipates having information available in 2-3 weeks.	Defence to provide project plan of key activities and timelines to the Chair for dissemination to CRG
	There was discussion around Lake Cochrane and the need to stop it overflowing in a heavy rain event. Defence noted it is a complex issue and remediation is not easy. The community disputed the statement citing solutions had been found in other industries for similar issues. The community wants details of timeframes that Defence is working towards on this and other issues.	
	Defence advised that the recent drinking water issue on 19 January 2016 had no relation to the PFOS/PFOA contamination issue. It related to 3 fire hose sites and all staff and visitors were put on bottled water as a precaution. The community iterated to Defence that it would have been beneficial if Defence had been more transparent by communicating the progress of the investigation and how it got into the water supply. EPA noted that Defence had shared all reports received regarding the drinking water with Health, but is still awaiting the final report which will be shared with Health when received.	Defence to circulate the information on the 19.1.16 contamination to the CRG via the Chair.
	Environmental Protection Authority	
	EPA noted that the community has been receptive and appreciative of the community liaison officer. The community agreed that it is working well and the feedback has been positive.	
	NSW Health	
	Community acknowledged the establishment of an outreach mental health service at Fern Bay and appreciated how quickly the message had been disseminated within the community. Health	

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
	<p>noted that EnHealth is still developing the national guidelines and the information will be shared as soon as it becomes available.</p> <p>Department of Primary Industries</p> <p>A teleconference to be held on Monday with Fishers to progress financial assistance strategies.</p>	<p>DPC to arrange teleconference on fishers financial assistance issues</p>
7.	<p>Port Stephens Council</p> <p>Deferred to next meeting.</p>	
8. Community feedback and issues (by exception)	<p>(a) Mr Clout gave a detailed understanding of the way the surface water and the 14 foot and 10 foot drains work. He spoke about how these drains flow into a singular ring drain which flows south to the flood gates and that there is no other flood gates. When the flood gate is closed at Fullerton Cove the water in the drains backs up and flows back toward the Tilligerry. This is important as it established for the EPA new understanding that surface water and inundated water can and does carry the contaminants from Lake Cochrane down, past the red line to the Flood gates and that when it floods (as it did recently) this water backs up across private property outside the red line. This area was independently tested (including Mr Shearman's property which has now been tested by EPA on their recent visit) as suggested by the community at the previous CRG meeting.</p> <p>(b) Dr Glamore spoke in detail about groundwater modelling to determine the contamination zone boundary. This is now better understood by the community. He also said that his modelling was in theory and also in practice. He had been asking Defence to assist him with practical modelling but up to now they have not supplied requested information to him since before Christmas.</p> <p>(c) Justin supplied a detailed coloured graphical site plan to the group for future reference and use. It explained visually for everyone how the drains and other ecological items in the area exist. Professor Mary O'Kane requested a digital copy and this action is now completed. The hard copy has been retained by Jeremy Hillman, community liaison officer.</p> <p>(d) Lindsay and Justin also asked Dr Glamore for formal confirmation if his groundwater modelling study included the extensive bores and extraction volumes affecting the groundwater; as with the new Fern Bay housing estate there has been a rush on private bores as well as the new commercial extraction licences recently granted in the area.</p> <p>(e) The School P&C rep asked if the regime for blood testing suggested by the State enquiry can be explained and a timetable given. Health's response was this would be a Defence action not Health.</p> <p>(f) Defence were asked how many houses still receive bottled</p>	

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
	water. They took this away to come back with response for next meeting. (g) Lindsay again requested that all water connection costs to safe town water be at cost of Defence not left to residents to fit bills for unknowns (refer action 1602-6)	
9. Other business	NII	
10. Future meetings	Thursday 18 February 2016, 4.00 – 6.00pm, Newcastle Airport Boardroom.	

Meeting closed 6.15pm

Next meeting 4.00-6.00pm Thursday 18 February at Newcastle Airport Boardroom.