

Endorsed Minutes 4 August 2016

Meeting: Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)
Date: 4 August 2016
Location: Newcastle Airport Boardroom Time: 3.30pm to 6.25pm
Number: 1611
Chairperson: Adam Gilligan | Regional Director, North | NSW EPA
Secretariat: Cheryl Clarke | Senior Coordination Officer | Department of Premier and Cabinet

Attendees:

Jodie Calvert | Principal Coordinator | Department of Premier and Cabinet
Scot MacDonald | Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter & Central Coast
Chris Birrer | First Assistant Secretary | Department of Defence
Air Commodore Craig Heap | Department of Defence
James McLachlan | Department of Defence
Sarah Davis | Department of Defence
Karen Marler | A/Manager Hunter Region | EPA
Clair Cameron | Director Stakeholder Engagement & Communication | EPA
Sarah Gardner | Executive Director, Hazardous Incidents & Environmental Health | EPA
Evelina Hendry | Senior Stakeholder & Communications Officer | EPA
Dr Craig Dalton | Hunter New England Local Health District
Dr Kathryn Taylor | Hunter New England Local Health District
Prof David Durrheim | Hunter New England Local Health District
Dr Chris Armstrong | Office of the Chief Scientist
Glenda Briggs | Regional Manager | Department of Primary Industries
Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council
Don Burgoyne | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer
Phil Blanch | Community Member and Fisher's Representative
Lyndsay Clout | Fullerton Cove Resident
Nick Marshall | Salt Ash Community First

Apologies

Rhianna Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group
Cain Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group
Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group
Julie Bailey | Salt Ash Community First
Robert Gauta | Manager, Commercial Fisherman's Coop
Cornelius Disselkoen | Maria's Vegetable Farm | Community Member

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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
1611-1	Defence to advise whether the national contamination register is a publicly available document	Defence	25.8.16
1611-2	Defence to circulate the revised version of the community questions and answers table for the community to work on	Defence	11.8.16
1611-3	Defence and EPA to revisit the issue of higher levels in Moors Drain and their source following release of the ESA	Defence/EPA	25.8.16
1611-4	EPA will review their website to (i) identify what information needs to be amended to include PFHxS; and (ii) reconcile reporting arrangements for the 3 chemicals concerned	EPA	25.8.16
1611-5	NSW Health to followup whether Mental Health Services will attend the drop-in event	Health	completed
1611-6	DPC to email CRG community members seeking feedback on meeting date	DPC	completed

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Meeting minutes

1. Endorsement of Minutes – 7 July 2016 and 21 July 2016

Requested amendments sought by Justin Hamilton for the 7.7.16 minutes were included. The Chair made a decision that the personal question directed to Dr Scalley would not be included in the minutes. Endorsed.

Minutes of 21 July 2016 Endorsed.

2. Actions List

1608-2 DPI protocol circulated to Fishers

1608-9 Proposal by Family Action Centre has been submitted to Defence for decision.

1609-8 DPC amended fishers flyer and DPI has re-circulated to fishers. NSW Health has also prepared a revised flyer which can be circulated to the wider community. Defence advised that the Department of Human Services has updated its website to reflect information included in the letter to fishers.

1610-4, 1610-6, 1610-11, 1610-15 Defence has included answers to these questions in the community questions and answers table. Lindsay noted that the burial site has been included in the national contamination register and asked whether this is a publicly accessible document.

Defence to advise whether the national contamination register is a publicly available document.

1610-5 Community to forward table of questions and answers to Chair, when completed. Defence to circulate the revised version for community to work on.

Defence to circulate the revised version of the community questions and answers table for the community to work on

1610-13 EPA advised that they met with OEH around mechanical weed removal and will conduct water sampling ahead of the weed removal in a number of drains. Lindsay Clout requested that attention be focused on the 10' and 14' drains. EPA advised that details of the sampling and weed removal program and the locations being maintained will be made available to community, once the plan is finalised.

3. HHRA – Community Technical Briefing Session

Dr Kathryn Taylor, Public Health Medicine Registrar, Hunter New England Population Health, delivered a presentation to the CRG community members on scientific terminology likely to be encountered when reading the human health risk assessment report. At the request of the CRG community members, Dr Taylor also presented on the different methodologies used between the European and USA guidelines when determining health reference values to assist in understanding how the different values were derived. Dr Taylor's presentation can be viewed at: <https://wsi.li/RBjJ5QVJ5RaO/>. There was no objection by the community to recording of the presentation and release to the wider community.

Karl Bowles, Senior Scientist, Office of Environment and Heritage, joined the presentation by phone and was available for any questions.

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4. Arrangements for the release of ESA and HHRA reports

Defence will deliver a joint briefing on the release of the ESA and HHRA to the CRG and ERG on 8 August 2016 ahead of the public presentation on 9 August 2016 and community drop-in session on 10 August 2016. Defence will letter-box drop flyers to residents which will include details of the courtesy bus provided by Defence and pickup/drop off sites. Defence will video record the presentation and upload it to the Defence website for viewing by the wider community.

The Department of Primary Industry will hold an additional separate briefing for Fishers Groups' representatives on the morning of Tuesday 9 August 2016 to discuss implications for local fishers. DPI advised that no decisions about fishing closures can be made at this stage.

5. Federal Government commitments

EnHealth Review

The Federal Minister for Health has announced an independent review of the EnHealth Guidelines by Adjunct Professor Andrew Bartholomaeus. The review has commenced with findings to be delivered by the end of August 2016.

Voluntary blood testing

Defence confirmed that administrative arrangements will be put in place for the Federal Government to reimburse costs already incurred by residents for blood testing. Nick Marshall provided a copy of his invoice to Defence.

Water Reticulation

Defence will liaise with Hunter Water regarding funding of \$3.5m by the Federal Government. Hunter Water activities continue and Defence commits to supporting connection to reticulated water including through funding compliance checks. Lindsay Clout noted that the community is seeking more funding to deliver water reticulation to residents situated outside but on the border of the investigation area.

6. Agencies updates

Defence

Letter from Minister Payne to the CRG community members was noted. Lindsay's reply to the Minister asked six questions. Defence replied:

- Questions 1 and 6 will be answered in the ESA report.
- Question 2 timelines for the release of the documents by Defence were discussed and mutually agreed with the EPA. There has been a range of communications between the Expert Panel and Defence with AECOM taking on board the comments from the Expert Panel.
- Question 3 Defence made a commitment to provide information to the community as soon as it became available. The Olympics and census night had no bearing on the public release timelines.
- Question 4 – Defence confirmed that the \$3.5m is for the costs associated with the physical connection of the property to the water reticulation network.

Question 5 - Adjunct Professor Andrew Bartholomaeus has been appointed by the Federal government to review the EnHealth guidelines.

Defence advised that as at 29.7.16, there had been 491 residential samples taken

with 48 detections.

NSW EPA

EPA advised that a media release was issued following results from recent testing of surface water and foam residue in Moors drain. At the time of testing, the foam had lost its aeration and was more scum-like material. The level of PFOS detected in foam was 90 micrograms per litre and the water in the drain was 2.9 micrograms per litre. Expert advice is that it is not unusual for PFAS to be attracted from water so the concentration of PFOS is higher in the foam. EPA is unable to confirm the source at present but noted the concentrations are significantly lower than what you would need for PFOS to produce foam. Community did their own testing of water in Moors Drain and result was 29.3 micrograms per litre. EPA advised that due to the small quantity it was appropriate to allow the foam to dissipate.

The community is concerned that higher levels are being detected in water coming off the base and into the community. Nick Marshall noted that in the same drain EPA test in January showed 0.43 and community testing came back 29.3. Samples were taken on a Monday following rain on Friday.

The lack of controls on surface water leaking from the base is a significant concern to the community. Lindsay sought clarification on whether the foam in the drains will be cleared given the high level of PFOS. EPA advised that its focus is to work with Defence to stop the leak and removal of the foam is not warranted given the existing precautions in place.

Defence and EPA to revisit the issue of higher levels and their source following release of the ESA.

Nick Marshall also raised concern regarding inhalation from the foam coming up to the surface as an exposure pathway. It was noted that inhalation exposure pathway will be addressed as part of the HHRA.

Nick Marshall questioned why PFHxS wasn't included in media release given its inclusion in EnHealth guidelines and the result of a higher level when combined with PFOS. EPA advised that PFOS has been the focus to date. EPA will review their website to (i) identify what information needs to be amended to include PFHxS; and (ii) reconcile reporting arrangements for the 3 chemicals concerned.

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NSW DPI

The DPI will conduct a survey of Hunter River commercial fishers about how different areas in the Hunter River are used. Current catch record information only identifies activity to the Hunter River which limits its ability to estimate the impact of closures to parts of the river. DPI noted the information will be helpful when assessing the impacts of any potential fishing closures. Phil Blanch expressed concerns around the potential for decisions to be made on inaccurate information provided in the survey. Phil also noted that fishing patterns vary and it is difficult to specify exactly. Phil suggested another approach of: – if it's safe to eat –open. If it's not safe to eat – close.

NSW Health

NSW Health has requested advice on whether the mental health service can

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operate as an outreach service. There was discussion about whether mental health counsellors should attend the drop-in event or whether a preferable option would be to make a referral given the public nature of the drop-in event.

NSW Health to follow up whether Mental Health Services will attend the drop-in event

7. General Business

Oyster Testing – Don Burgoyne requested information on whether there will be follow up testing for oysters given the higher levels in surface water moving into Tilligerry Creek. EPA advised that the NSW Government will consider that issue as part of its response to Defence on what further testing needs to occur.

Willow Lane – Lindsay advised that residents in Willow Lane will contact Defence directly for testing to be undertaken on their properties.

Soil removed – PSC advised that the soil came from a weed infestation area. As there was no detection in the sediment, routine disposal occurred.

Love Seafood Campaign – Phil noted that fishers were concerned that others in the industry were benefiting at their expense. PSC noted that the campaign and expenditure of funds is overseen by a committee including DPI, Destination Port Stephens, fishing and oyster industry reps. The fishers are seeking assurance that similar support would be still available for Hunter Rivers fishers brand damage efforts after decisions are made regarding fishing closures. The meeting was advised that there is \$18,500 remaining in the fund and there continues to be a commitment to Hunter fishers. Don Burgoyne commented on the broader industry wide value of campaigns to boost seafood sales. Don also noted that the negative impacts of consumer concerns about seafood and the benefits of a campaign such as Love Seafood, Love Port Stephens extend well beyond a specific harvest area.

Additional testing – Nick Marshall asked whether there will be additional testing in Salt Ash PS. Defence noted that the Principal of Salt Ash PS has advised Defence that the current management arrangements the school has in place are satisfactory. The community requested that another round of testing be provided to residents given the passage of time since initial testing and for peace of mind. EPA advised that the NSW Government will respond to Defence around frequency and location of further testing that should be conducted.

Bait – Phil Blanch asked whether Fullerton Cove could be used for bait fishing if there is a closure decision. EPA advised that there would not be any exception made as part of closures.

8. Future meetings

The Chair proposed that due to the need for CRG community members to attend a number of forums this week, the next CRG meeting be held on Thursday 25 August.

DPC to email CRG community members seeking feedback on meeting date.

Meeting closed Meeting closed 6.25pm

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on TBA.