

Endorsed Minutes

Meeting:	Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)	Date: 1 October 2015
Location:	Newcastle Airport Boardroom	Time: 4:00 to 6:10 pm
Number:	1501	
Chairperson:	Bill Tatnell Snr Regional Coordinator Department of Premier & Cabinet (DPC)	
Attendees:	Scott McDonald Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and Central Coast	
	Jodie Calvert Asst. Regional Coordinator DPC (Secretariat)	
	Aaron Spadaro Regional Liaison Officer DPC	
	Adam Gilligan Manager Hunter Region Environment Protection Authority	
	Wayne Wallis General Manager Port Stephens Council	
	Ian Lyall Manager Aquaculture Department of Primary Industries	
	Prof David Durrheim Director Health Protection Hunter New England Local Health District (via phone)	
	Air Commodore Steve Roberton Senior Australian Defence Force Officer RAAF Base Williamtown Department of Defence	
	Alison Clifton Estate and Infrastructure Group Department of Defence	
	Stacey Hannan Estate and Infrastructure Group Department of Defence	
	Cornelius Disselkoen Maria's Vegetable Farm Community Member	
	Cain Gorfine President, Williamtown and surrounds Residents Action Group Community Member	
	Lyndsay Clout President, Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group Community Member	
	Justin Hamilton Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group Community Member	
	Robert Gauta Manager, Commercial Fisherman's Coop Community Member	
	Don Burgoyne NSW Farmer's Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer	
Apologies:	Mark Salm NSW Farmer's Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer	
	Andrew Smith CEO Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council Community Member	
	Jacqueline Payne Manager Strategic Communications Department of Defence	

Action Register

Number	Action Item	Agency/Owner	Due Date
1501-1	Update wording of Terms of Reference (ToR) as provided by Defence and redistribute new Terms to members for their information	DPC	Immediate
1501-2	Meetings to be advertised in the Port Stephens Examiner prior to meeting dates. To organise through EPA.	DPC	Ongoing
1501-3	Key CRG key community messages to be provided to all members	DPC	Immediate and ongoing
1501-4	Communication arrangements to be included in the ToR.	DPC	Immediate
1501-5	Options regarding how meeting minutes are recorded and displayed to be considered.	DPC	Immediate
1501-6	Copy of private drain testing results to be provided to EPA.	C Disselkoen	Immediate
1501-7	Community members to provide feedback as to whether the presentation of the Response Plan is a useful document for the community.	All community members	8 October 2015
1501-8	Stock testing to also be included in the Response Plan	EPA	Immediate
1501-9	Honey testing to be included in the Response Plan	DPI	Immediate
1501-10	FAQs are developed in consultation with the CRG or relevant industry to ensure that the messaging is framed in the correct way. To be raised by EPA at the Expert Panel meeting.	EPA Expert Panel	Immediate
1501-11	Options on how to relieve community fears to increase the numbers of community members willing to participate in bore testing to be brought to the next meeting.	All members	8 October 2015
1501-12	Collated feedback from the community meeting to be provided to all CRG members	C Gorfine	Immediate
1501-13	Mental health services support to the community to be discussed with NSW Health	DPC	Immediate

Number	Action Item	Agency/Owner	Due Date
1501-14	Issues log to be distributed to CRG members for completion and returned to Jodie for collation	DPC All members	Immediate COB 6 October
1501-15	List of sites determined by the community for private testing to be forwarded to EPA.	C Gorfine	Immediate

Discussion

Item no. Discussion

1. Opening Remarks

The CRG has been established to address community concerns or complaints associated with the detection of PFOS and PFOA in Williamstown and surrounding areas, and to restore community confidence in the response being undertaken by NSW Government agencies and the Department of Defence (Defence).

Both the Premier and the Minister for the Environment is focussed on addressing community concerns, with the Minister and the Chief Scientist, Mary O'Kane attending the next meeting to be held on 8 October 2015.

The CRG will have a direct link to the Expert Panel and are able to request representatives of agencies or the Expert Panel to attend their meetings to respond to community concerns as required.

The CRG has a focus on ensuring effective communication flow between the community, the Expert Panel, Defence and relevant NSW agencies.

2. Terms of Reference

Defence provided new wording for paragraph 2 with a request for changes to be accepted, which was endorsed – *action*.

Suggestion: that a statement of expected outcomes is included in the ToR, covering key areas of interest.

Response: it is expected that the Response Plan currently being developed for CRG input and the Issues Log (to be distributed to members) will provide this information.

3. Protocols for meetings, media and ongoing communications

It was agreed that there be one spokesperson for the CRG however; there is no embargo on community members talking to the media as long as they are clear that the messaging was their own personal point of view and not that of the CRG.

It was agreed that key community messages would be distributed to the members for CRG use.

Suggestion: that advertising the meeting and key points in the Port Stephens Examiner would be helpful for the community – *action*.

EPA advised that they have already established a dedicated webpage, which will be updated

Item no. Discussion

regularly to provide information to the Community.

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/mediainformation/community-reference-williamtown.htm>

Key information and minutes of meetings are to be posted on the website as well as the ability for community to submit queries.

Communication arrangements are also to be included in the ToR – *action*.

It was noted that there are many in the community that have no access to the internet and that consideration needed to be given as to how they would receive information. It was agreed that more traditional forms of information dissemination was required and that the CRG need to consider this for their next meeting – *action*.

Meeting frequency to be determined at each meeting however, it was agreed that the group would meet weekly during October.

Question was raised as to how minutes are recorded and the possibility of having them displayed on an overhead. Other suggestions included recording the meeting to assist development of the minutes. These options were to be considered – *action*.

4. Clarification of the different groups involved

EPA is leading the State Government response and provides the direct link on behalf of the State into Defence.

An Expert Panel has been established under EPA legislation to advise the Minister for the Environment. It is a technical panel headed by the NSW Chief Scientist, Mary O'Kane.

The CRG is closely linked to the Expert Panel. The CRG has a direct link to the Premier through the Parliamentary Secretary.

An Elected Representatives Group has been established by Scot Macdonald for the local Members of Parliament both State and Federal, and local Council members.

Comment: C Gorfine emphasised the CRGs ability to actively engage with the Premier and Ministers both State and Commonwealth.

Response: The Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter will ensure ongoing engagement.

5. EPA Update – Adam Gilligan

Relevant NSW agencies teleconference with Defence twice weekly and liaise daily on issues that are needed to progress. EPA is maintaining a 'regulator relationship' with Defence to ensure compliance actions is met. This was detailed in correspondence to Defence 7 September 2015. EPA has requested a Health Risk Assessment to be undertaken by Defence with a focus on the pathways for transference. There is also a focus on the remediation work required by Defence.

Current sampling by NSW relates to "filling the gaps" in the short term until Defence results come to hand. Current testing will also assist in whether the interrogation area can be either reduced or needs to be extended.

Item no. Discussion

C Gorfine reiterated the need to draw on the experience from the Okie Defence site and the advice to undertake blood testing to establish a baseline for long term recording of community health – noted.

R Gauta raised the question as to work being undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Advisory Committee. The Chair advised that the Expert Panel was aware – noted.

A copy of a draft Response Plan, detailing actions undertaken to date and planned for, was provided to the members and discussion followed. Key players are yet to complete their input but will do so asap, including Defence.

C Disselkoen made reference to drain testing results undertaken on his property in 2012. EPA requested a copy of that testing – *action*.

A Gilligan asked the community members to consider if the way in which the Response Plan has been presented is useful from the community's perspective and if not, to put forward some recommendations – *action*.

General comments:

Some of the preliminary fish and prawn sampling test results are in and need to be assessed by the Expert Panel. Crab samples were being driven to the laboratory for testing today.

Eggs and milk are yet to be tested. Some have been provided but need to understand the best way they should be tested. Awaiting advice on this – noted.

Testing of flora, fauna, animal and pet testing included. Request that stock as well as animal testing be included in the plan – *action*.

There was a request that honey also be tested – *action*.

There has been no decision as yet from the Expert Panel regarding human health testing however; Defence will be undertaking a Health Risk Assessment.

Community members provided examples as to why human health testing is required and most particularly various medical conditions that are being experienced within the community – noted.

Don Burgoyne raised the issue of how FAQs are developed and updated, in particular how the test results may be released and how community members may interpret them or when used by the media. The Oyster industry needs to recover its brand in the area. It was requested that any FAQs are developed in consultation with the CRG or relevant industry to ensure that the messaging is framed in the correct way. This would be raised with the Expert Panel at its meeting the following day - *action*.

6. Defence Update – Alison Clifton

Defence are still undertaking sampling of bores in the investigation area. To date they have sampled 14 properties with 17 bores. As a result drinking water has been provided to three properties. A letterbox drop was undertaken last Monday to ensure all residents within the area were contacted however; there is concern about the low numbers being received.

Item no. Discussion

Defence sought advice from the community members.

Community response: The community are concerned about providing their personal details and how that information will be used and that there needs to be a system in place for them to get their water tested without having to provide this information.

It was noted that the data is being de-identified, that the legal release statement was required if sharing the results with EPA, and that Council has put out a release advising that they have no role in the licensing of bores.

Suggestion: To undertake a doorknock.

Response: Defence advised that they still require written consent to undertake the testing.

Ultimately, the issue sits around the messaging and how to get information to the community regarding the need to undertake the sampling of bores and how to allay their fears around providing information.

It was noted that having the information recorded is extremely important as it identifies how the water is being used, eg. for drinking, watering vegetables or fill swimming pools as this will then determine the pathways. D Durrheim reiterated that this information is critical to health risk assessments.

Action: Options to be brought to the next meeting.

General comments:

It was commented that drains as well as bores be tested due to the high water table at approximately 700mm under the surface which interconnects surface and groundwater, and the need to test the myriad of drains in Fullerton Cover down to the floodgates near Stanley Park – noted.

Advice provided by Defence that bores, groundwater and surface water would all be tested. Advice was also provided that the Expert Panel had adopted the Europeans standards of assessment for food – noted.

7. Community Meeting Update – C Gorfine

The meeting was advised that the community met primarily out of the frustration they were feeling as a result of the outcomes of the meeting held at Stockton three weeks earlier. The purpose was to gather community concerns/issues in a collaborative environment.

Four key topics of concern were identified:

1. Water, soil and produce testing and concerns – the community want testing done and they want it done yesterday.
 2. Health impacts both humans and animals - examples of health issues related to children skin disorders and allergies.
 3. Compensation related to land values, income, town water and loss of amenity – the financial burden of not being able to use bores. Increase cost related to having to turn to town water and increase the purchase of stock feed.
 4. Who is at fault and the total lack of communication with regard to what is going on and who is ultimately responsible for responding to the issue.
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Item no. Discussion

General comments and observations regarding feedback from the meeting:

Fishermen require compensation and they need it now – they cannot wait another 4 weeks.

They need to pay their bills and feed their families.

The Real Estate Institute has already made comment regarding the reduction in house values.

In some instances, banks have already rung their clients about house values and mortgages.

W Wallis made the observation about the level of anxiety and concern and how this may be impacting on the mental health of community members – there is a need to respond to this.

J Hamilton advised that trust is a massive issue for the community. The community's concerns are broader - believe it is not just firefighting foam as they believe there has been dumping of aviation hydraulic fluid into the systems as well.

Media reports three days ago about the child care centre having to close due to noise pollution. Concerns related to sick children in the community having played in the soil at the child care centre.

It was noted that generations of people have utilised the borewater in the Williamstown and Salt Ash are and that there was widespread concern over the impacts over time.

Having an understanding of what we are actually dealing with is critical.

Mental health services support to the community to be discussed with NSW Health – *action*.

C Gorfine advised that during the meeting they raised over \$600 towards undertaking private testing on 10 sites determined by the community. Adam Gilligan advised that EPA would pay for that testing and suggested the Williamstown and Surrounds Action Group should redirect their funds towards other community assistance. This assistance was acknowledged by Cain and he would forward the sites to Adam for testing to be undertaken – *action*.

Collated feedback from the community meeting to be provided to all CRG members – *action*.

8. Issues Log

It was agreed that an Issues Log would be distributed with the minutes for completion by members and returned to Jodie for collation.

Meeting closed 6:10pm.

Next meeting 4:00 to 6:00 pm Thursday 8 October at Newcastle Airport Boardroom.