

Endorsed Minutes

7 April 2017

Meeting:	Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)		
Date:	7 April 2017		
Location:	Newcastle Airport Boardroom	Time: 9:35am – 11:50am	
Number:	1704		
Chairperson:	Jodie Calvert Principal Coordinator Department of Premier and Cabinet		
Secretariat:	Kristen McPherson CRG Secretariat Coordination Support Officer Department of Premier and Cabinet		
Attendees:	<p>Air Commodore Craig Heap Department of Defence</p> <p>Michelle Butler Estate and Infrastructure Department of Defence</p> <p>Mark O’Connell Department of Defence</p> <p>Sarah Davis Project Officer Department of Defence</p> <p>Vicki Pearce PFAS Branch Department of Defence</p> <p>Chris Birrer First Assistant Secretary Department of Defence</p> <p>Chris Carlile Prime Minister and Cabinet PFAS TaskForce</p> <p>Nicola Powell Prime Minister and Cabinet PFAS TaskForce</p> <p>Sharon Appleyard Federal Department of Health</p> <p>Evan Comtesse Federal Department of Health</p> <p>Kathy Kent Department of Human Services</p> <p>Kate Washington State Member for Port Stephens</p> <p>Glenda Briggs Regional Manager Department of Primary Industries</p> <p>Sarah Gardner Executive Director Hazardous Incidents and Environmental Health EPA</p> <p>Asela Attapatu Director Hazardous Materials Chemicals and Radiation EPA</p> <p>Karen Marler Manager Hunter Region EPA</p> <p>Sam Waskett Project Officer Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Strategy EPA</p> <p>Dr David Durrheim Hunter New England Local Health District</p> <p>John Maretich Asset Section Manager Port Stephens Council</p> <p>Don Burgoyne NSW Farmer’s Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer</p> <p>Lyndsay Clout Fullerton Cove Resident</p> <p>Robert Gauta Manager, Commercial Fishermen’s Coop</p> <p>Phil Blanch Community Member and Fisher’s Representative</p> <p>Rhianna Gorfine Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group</p> <p>Nick Marshall Salt Ash Community First</p> <p>Kim Smith Salt Ash Community First</p>		

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Apologies

Marcus Jeffrey | Estate and Infrastructure | Department of Defence
Adam Gilligan | Regional Director North | Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
Dr Kat Taylor | Hunter New England Local Health District
Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council
Andrew Smith | CEO Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council | Community Member
Mark Salm | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer
Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group
Cornelius Disselkoe | Maria's Vegetable Farm | Community Member

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1704-1	EPA to discuss with Hunter Water that greater consideration is given to where stockpiled soils are located in the future.	EPA	21/4/2017
1704-2	Chris Carlile to forward the letter to the PM's office. The Chair to undertake the same action for the Premier.	Chair/PMCT	14/4/2017
1704-3	Glenda Briggs/David Durrheim/Robert Gauta to discuss developing a flyer or document for distributing information on food/fish consumption for both customers and the community at large.	DPI/Health/RG	28/4/2017
1704-4	Defence to check on the information provided by NMI regarding testing levels.	Defence	28/4/2017
1704-5	Chair to re-send information sheet on remediation activities including the use of water treatment plants on base	Chair	14/4/2017
1704-6	Defence to discuss with Kim to gain a better understanding of these experiences in order to improve hotline responses.	Defence	21/4/2017
1704-7	Defence to provide update on the plant trial and circulate the design of the study to the CRG.	Defence	21/4/2017
1704-8	Defence to arrange for a presentation to the next CRG meeting on hydrology of the affected areas.	Defence	21/4/2017
1704-9	EPA to circulate EPA response to CRG with a view to look at a review of the red line.	EPA	21/4/2017

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Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1704-10	Chair to invite Newcastle Airport CEO Peter Cock to a future meeting to provide overview of NAPAL Masterplan.	Chair	21/4/2017
1704-11	DPC to forward Council's PFOS/PFAS drainage testing results link to CRG and EPA who will link to Council's website.	DPC/EPA	14/4/2017
1704-12	Defence & PSC to discuss next steps for a hydrological study of the drain.	Defence/PSC	21/4/2017
1704-13	EPA to forward copy of waste management plan to CRG for comment when completed.	EPA	30/6/2017

Meeting minutes

1. Endorsement of Minutes – 2 March 2017

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2. Actions List

1613-10 – Chris Carlile (PMCT) advised no timing on this, range of options under consideration by Government.

1701-5 - EPA advised the plain-English fact sheet on Dr Bowles' presentation on air monitoring has been circulated.

1702-5 - Ongoing – EPA's Williamtown PFAS Community Engagement Officer Bianca Evans starts on 18 May 2017, Bianca to contact Phil before the drain cleaning commences.

1703-3 – Soil stockpiling - Community members raised concerns that stockpiled soils in the Investigation Area are automatically assumed to be contaminated, which gives a poor impression of the area and raises fears of additional contamination to areas previously not impacted by PFAS. EPA advised the soil has been tested and contains no PFAS.

Action Item 1: EPA to discuss with Hunter Water that greater consideration is given to where stockpiled soils are located in the future.

1703-4 – Dusky Flathead Closure still to be formally lifted however, this would likely occur over the following week. Item to be left as an ongoing action until ban is lifted.

3. Open Community Discussion

Chris Carlile from Prime Minister & Cabinet Taskforce (PMCT) advised the Government has a range of options under consideration with regards to the contamination at Williamtown; he has no timeframe on this.

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The CRG was also advised that the Taskforce provides a coordinated whole of government approach to ensure consistent information, messaging and approaches are taken with regard to responding to PFAS issues.

Chris Carlile advised that he and Federal Health representatives attended the Community Walk-in event and the CRG meeting to gain an understanding of the issues affecting the community to relay this information back to PMCT and therefore the Prime Minister. In turn, the community wanted to know exactly what he would be taking back. This was reinforced by Ms Washington and that it was important to ensure that the Taskforce and the Prime Minister were very much aware of how the contamination was basically ruining people's lives.

Chris advised the issues he will take back included the level of anxiety being experienced by the community, concerns regarding property values, that the community feel trapped in this situation, as well as the related fears within the community regarding the impacts on health.

The community expressed their concerns that the PMCT may only be 'another layer of government to deal with' and disappointment that the Prime Minister was displaying a lack of interest in this community and is yet to provide anything in response to the contamination.

Nick Marshall expressed the community's extreme disappointment that the Prime Minister had finally sent his direct representatives to the community after all this time, but they were empty handed and with nothing to offer.

Rhianna Gorfine read and tabled a letter by Cain Gorfine formally requesting the Prime Minister and the Premier to meet with a select group of community representatives as a matter of priority. The letter also expressed the hurt being experienced by the community and lack of compassion and understanding they feel is lacking from scientists and bureaucrats.

Action Item 2: Chris Carlile to forward the letter to the PM's office. The Chair to undertake the same action for the Premier.

Phil Blanch expressed concern about the FSANZ media release and the negative affect this had on fishers. In particular, he raised the lack of consultation with the fishers and that the report and media release should have been discussed with local stakeholders before it was released. This was acknowledged.

Robert Gauta said the Co-op required a simple one page document containing key messages to give to the community and customers.

It was noted that the Seafood Easter campaign was ready to be launched but this was delayed due to the FSANZ report being released. However, the Fisherman's Co-op will continue marketing its brand and will relaunch the prawn campaign later in the year when the season commences.

Action Item 3: Glenda Briggs/David Durrheim/Robert Gauta to discuss developing a flyer or document for distributing information on food/fish consumption for both customers and the community at large.

Lindsay Clout raised question on how Lake Cochran performed during the recent heavy rains. Defence advised that Lake Cochran did not overflow, noting that during the drier months, the Lake Cochran Water Treatment Plant had continued to treat water to lower the level in preparation for future rain events.

Lindsay requested confirmation of testing levels against the new FSANZ values. Defence advised that the Limit of Reporting is already 0.01, lower than 0.7 criteria for drinking water.

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Kim Smith advised she had an email by NMI stating they can go lower. Defence advised that Ultra trace can be used to go lower but this method has a higher level of uncertainty.

Action Item 4: Defence to check on the information provided by NMI regarding testing levels.

Defence advised there is an information sheet available on Defence's website and which had previously been distributed to the CRG on remediation activities including the use of water treatment plants on base.

Action Item 5: Chair to resend information sheet on remediation activities including the use of water treatment plants on base.

Community reps expressed concerns around the language used in the FSANZ information by Dr Tony Hobbs at the community drop-in event. Terms such as 'no adverse health effects' is an insult and only builds anger within the community. The use of language and how it is interpreted need to be considered when delivering information to the community and that there is merit in testing this with the CRG members.

A question was also raised on whether agencies take away questions from the Community drop-in events? There was a concern that the questions raised from the floor at these events seem to be the same questions being asked each time events are held.

Chris Birrer advised there is a wide range of information on the Defence's website and people can also contact the AECOM hotline number.

In response, Kim Smith advised that she had been speaking to a resident in the community who had contacted the hotline regarding the blood testing program and been provided the incorrect contact number for Health.

Action Item 6: Defence to discuss with Kim to gain a better understanding of these experiences in order to improve hotline responses

Defence provided an update on the fruit and vegetable uptake study occurring on the Base. These trials involve a scientifically credible study looking at the PFAS uptake on a range of fruits and vegetables that have been watered with water containing PFAS from Williamtown and Oaky sites. A scientific report for publication will be available at the end of the study. Plants are currently at the early development stage and are growing at a rate to be expected.

Action Item 7: Defence to provide update on the plant trial and circulate the design of the study to the CRG.

Don Burgoyne commented on the map displayed at the Community drop-in event and that it was the first time he had heard that the plume at Salt Ash resulted from 'upwelling'. He advised that the top of Tilligerry Creek has focussed on surface water but upwelling raising additional concerns about the Creek and requested more information about the hydrology of the Williamtown aquifer.

Action Item 8: Defence to arrange for a presentation to the next CRG meeting on the hydrology of the affected areas.

Nick Marshall advised that he had raised the question of air testing with Steve Grzeskowiak at the drop-in event. Nick advised that in response, Mr Grzeskowiak advised that the EPA needed to request Defence to undertake air testing and Defence would pay for it.

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EPA reinforced previous advice that there is no current and agreed methodology for testing PFAS in air that EPA can ask Defence to undertake.

In his absence, Lindsay Clout expressed concerns raised by Justin Hamilton, as follows:

Q: Is the RAMSAR Wetlands of Fullerton Cove part of the ERA and is there any value in hearing from a representative.

The Australian Government, Department of the Environment and Energy, is leading a formal assessment of the possible change in ecological character of the Hunter Estuary Ramsar site (Kooragang component) due to potential contamination by hazardous chemicals, including PFAS. The scope of the study is to consider of a change in ecological character of the Hunter Estuary Ramsar Site (Kooragang component) has occurred due to chemical contamination, the significance of the change and the cause of the change. Both the EPA and OEH are represented on a Steering Committee with oversight of this review. The review report is expected to be finalised early 2018.

Q: "Red Line" - Aquifer water, surface water, drainage systems, ground and air contamination and property devaluation does not stick to this line. At the very least the red line must be agile, just as the plume is not stationary. Is the line going to be reviewed or ground-truthed?

EPA advised they have prepared a response and are open to review this response.

Action Item 9: EPA to circulate EPA response to CRG with a view to look at a review of the red line.

Don Burgoyne requested an update on the new and smaller water treatment facility for Moors Drain.

Defence advised the contracts had been signed, with the plant due on site in approx. 3 months.

Nick Marshall advised he had heard that the RAAF Base/Newcastle Airport would be expanding.

The meeting was advised that there are no plans for a second runway however, Newcastle Airport were undertaking a master planning exercise for the site, with consultation already underway.

Chair suggested asking CEO of the Newcastle Airport to provide an overview of the NAPL Master Plan to the CRG into the future.

Action Item 10: Chair to invite Newcastle Airport CEO Peter Cock to a future meeting to provide an overview of NAPAL Masterplan.

John Maretich from Port Stephens Council will send a link to CRG on PFOS/PFAS drainage testing results on Councils website.

Action Item 11: DPC to forward link to CRG and EPA who will link to Council's website

4. Information Items:

4.1 Moors Drain Function Assessment update

Defence has forwarded the assessment report to Port Stephens Council, with Council now assessing the report to provide comment back to Defence.

The next step involves undertaking a Hydrological Study with agreement required on funding the study.

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Action Item 12: Defence & PSC to discuss next steps for a hydrological study of the drain

4.2 Drain clearing/waste management plan update

EPA advised Office of Environment & Health (OEH) are commissioning a consultant to undertake the clearing work but will not occur before summer.

The waste management plan is expected to be finalised in late June/early July and OEH to make the waste management plan available for community comment once completed.

Action Item 13: EPA to forward copy of waste management plan to CRG for comment when completed

Meeting closed: 11:50am

Next meeting: 11 May 2017