

Endorsed Minutes

26 November 2015

Meeting:	Williamtown Contamination Investigation Community Reference Group (CRG)	Date: 26 November 2015
Location:	Newcastle Airport Board Room	Time: 4:00 to 6:20pm
Number:	1507	
Chairperson:	Jodie Calvert A/Senior Regional Coordinator Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	
Secretariat:	Aaron Spadaro A/Asst Regional Coordinator DPC	
Attendees:	Adam Gilligan Manager Hunter Region Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	
	Jeremy Hillman Senior Stakeholder and Communications Officer EPA (telephone)	
	Ian Lyall Manager Aquaculture Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries)	
	Glenda Briggs Regional Manager Department of Primary Industries	
	Prof David Durrheim Director Health Protection Hunter New England Local Health District	
	Wayne Wallis General Manager Port Stephens Council	
	Air Vice Marshal Greg Evans Department of Defence	
	Mark Donaghey Department of Defence	
	Lyndsay Clout President, Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group	
	Justin Hamilton Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group	
	Don Burgoyne NSW Farmer's Association Community Member & Oyster Farmer	
	Robert Gauta Manager, Commercial Fisherman's Coop	
	Cornelius Disselkoen Maria's Vegetable Farm Community Member	
Apologies:	Scot MacDonald Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter & Central Coast	
	Bill Tatnell Senior Regional Co-ordinator DPC	
	Maureen Greet Department of Defence	
	Rhianna Gorfine Co-convenor, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group	

Cain Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

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

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

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1507-1	Defence to invite AECOM to present on their contamination investigation work, including purpose of current test well activities, safeguards against groundwater interference and proposals to stop surface water runoff from base.	Defence	10 December 2015
1507-2	DPC will write to the doctoral candidate to inform her of the CRG decision	DPC	ASAP
1507-3	EPA and DPC to distribute EPA's summary sampling recommendations to CRG members	EPA, DPC	ASAP
1507-4	DPC to distribute information on Salvation Army supports to the CRG for distribution through the community.	DPC	ASAP
1507-5	DPC to invite Mr Phil Blanch to join CRG, with Mr Robert Hamilton as his substitute.	DPC	ASAP
1507-6	Defence to seek guidance internally on how best to have CRG concerns raised in a more structured and official way within the Department of Defence.	Defence	ASAP
1506-7	Parliamentary Secretary to write to Minister Payne supporting the fishing industry request to meet.	Scot MacDonald MLC	ASAP
1506-8	NSW DPI to follow up with DHS Centrelink contact regarding comments received about changes to the three month assessment period.	NSW DPI	ASAP
1506-9	DPC to send emails formally thanking Professor O'Kane and Professor Jones for their involvement at community drop-in events.	DPC	ASAP
1506-10	Defence to provide information to EPA the need for immediate containment.	Defence	ASAP
1506-11	EPA to update FAQs to account for need for possible future changes to the investigation area, and that future changes cannot be ruled out.	EPA	ASAP

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1506-12	Defence and Cor Disselkoen to exchange details for contact and information sharing on algal and microbe treatment opportunities.	Defence, Cor Disselkoen	ASAP

Meeting minutes

Item / Issue	Response	Decision
1. Endorsement of Minutes	Amendments to clarify figures quoted in meeting provided by Defence and Port Stephens Council.	Noted
2.1 Actions List	<p>Measuring business impacts Council advised that survey forms developed for distribution. Progress, findings and outcomes when available will be reported to future CRG meetings.</p> <p>Community information on future Defence sampling program EPA advised that appointed auditors Cardno are reviewing Defence's Sampling and Quality Plan. Communications approach will be developed following outcomes of their review.</p> <p>Development site dewatering and soil movement Defence report their intention to commission a water purification plant onto the base from early 2016. This involves new technology designed to dewater, purify and return water to site. While a very large plant, it is only one of many methods needed to remediate the site. The proposed operation of the plant will be announced to the community shortly. Community representatives raised concerns about perceptions that the about community messages and perceptions of on base.</p> <p>Contaminated soil is to be stockpiled on base using a contained, engineered landfill technique with a surface cover. Defence has given direction to its contractor to come up with this design.</p> <p>EPA noted that the Newcastle Herald is seeking a site tour and information on base construction activities.</p> <p>Expert Panel consideration of international TDI standards International standards from the United States and Europe are still being considered. NSW Health will host a meeting of the National Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) in December to draft a national guideline Total Daily Intake (TDI) levels based on best evidence available.</p> <p>Outstanding Defence sampling requests Community representatives are continuing to supply details</p>	

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	<p>of residents waiting on testing to AVM Evans.</p> <p>Premier's meeting with CRG Confirmed that the Premier will meet with community and industry CRG representatives on 1 December 2015 to hear specific community concerns and impacts from the contamination investigation. Oyster growers will be represented by NSW Farmer's Federation representative, Jaimie Lovell.</p> <p>AECOM sampling activities CRG requested that AECOM are invited to present to outline the purpose of current test well activities, and safeguards in place to prevent against groundwater interference.</p>	<p>Defence to invite AECOM to present on their contamination investigation work, including purpose of current test well activities, safeguards against groundwater interference and proposals to stop surface water runoff from base.</p>
2. Observer status for Kate Hughes, PhD candidate	<p>The CRG considered a request from a doctoral candidate to observe future CRG meetings for research purposes.</p> <p>Hunter New England Health highlighted need for formal ethics approval through university so as to not erode CRG trust and confidentiality, as well as better understanding of her work from a formal research proposal. It was noted there could be good and bad learnings to add to the 'science' of future community engagement exercises.</p> <p>Several CRG members warned this request may shift attention away from key issues. In light of similar recent experiences of CRG members, it was determined that the forum is not conducive to this activity and to decline the request at this time.</p>	<p>DPC will write to the doctoral candidate to inform her of the CRG decision.</p>
3. Agency Reports (by exception)	<p>Department of Defence AVM Evans reported delivery of 76 sampling test results with 18 detections of PFOS/PFOA returned. All but two results have been hand delivered to residents. Less than five detections have significantly exceeded the detection threshold.</p> <p>NSW Environmental Protection Authority EPA advised of plans to recruit an additional media and communications specialist to assist locally with the contamination investigation. This also provides opportunity for Defence to coordinate its communications with consolidated messages in partnership with the EPA. EPA is also seeking further community and CRG feedback on possible exposure pathways for investigation through the</p>	<p>EPA and DPC to distribute EPA's summary sampling recommendations to CRG members</p>

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	<p>Human Health Risk Assessment.</p> <p>EPA also advised of plans to recruit an additional media and communications specialist to assist locally with the contamination investigation, providing opportunity for Defence to coordinate messages in partnership with the EPA.</p> <p>NSW Health / Hunter New England Health</p> <p>Hunter New England Health referred to a Hunter Water 26 November media release highlighting loss of approximately 2 percent of total water supply from the Tomago Sandbeds water storage. This short term loss of water does not threaten Hunter Water's ability to manage drought, but a longer term loss of this magnitude would require new costly measures to expand water supply. Hunter Water is calling on Defence to remediate effected parts of the Sandbeds.</p> <p>Department of Primary Industries</p> <p>NSW DPI reported on the latest sampling results for School Prawns, with higher level detections found at Fullerton Cove and very low detections at Hexham and Raymond Terrace. DPI has offered prawn trawlers opportunity to harvest in areas upstream of Hexham, but the fishers' have passed a motion to have a voluntary precautionary closure until more test results are available. Fishers want to protect consumers and the Hunter Prawns brand.</p> <p>The Expert Panel will consider fish sampling results at its next meeting on 2 December. EPA reiterated Expert Panel discussion that only the Human Health Risk Assessment can provide definitive health advice, including conclusive Total Daily Intakes (TDIs).</p> <p>NSW DPI has commenced contracting commercial fishers for sample collection work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of Hunter River fish, crab and prawn samples • 40% in Port Stephens • 20% in a control estuary (Wallis Lake). <p>The Newcastle Fisherman's Cooperative advised that Thornton-based charity Aussie Care is offering grocery vouchers to effected fishers.</p> <p>DPC advised that financial supports are also be available for individuals and businesses experiencing hardship through Salvation Army.</p> <p>The Cooperative advised of motions unanimously adopted by fishers at its 25 November meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>"Hunter fishers formally request that a fisher be allowed to join the CRG. That Phil Blanch be appointed (substitute Robert Hamilton)."</i> 	<p>DPC to distribute information on Salvation Army supports to the CRG for distribution through the community.</p>

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	The CRG endorsed the request.	DPC to invite Mr Phil Blanch to join CRG, with Mr Robert Hamilton as his substitute.
2. <i>"In light of recent test results, it is requested that the Department of Defence urgently commence compensation negotiations with Hunter and Port Stephens fishers impacted by PFOS/PFOA contamination."</i>	Defence highlighted that the Commonwealth (elected Minister) needs to be engaged. No Defence official can specifically make this request. Industry representatives have made a request to meet with Minister Payne but have not received a response. NSW DPI added that dialogue also should reflect needs of oyster farmers suffering brand damage impacts.	Defence to seek guidance internally on how best to have CRG concerns raised in a more structured and official way within the Department of Defence. Parliamentary Secretary to write to Minister Payne supporting the fishing industry request to meet.
3. <i>"That fishers have decided on a voluntary temporary closure of the Hunter prawn trawl pending further testing of prawns and advice from the Expert Panel. This is a precautionary measure. Despite the ongoing hardship, fishers have made this decision to protect the reputation of Hunter river prawns."</i>	DPI has offered prawn trawlers opportunity to harvest in areas upstream of Hexham, but the fishers' motion was carried given uncertainties of prawn movements and risks of contaminant spread.	
4. <i>"That the Department of Defence assistance package be modified to focus on income assistance as well as business costs, taking into account seasonality and diversification of business."</i>	DPC highlighted difficulties commercial fishers are having compiling back statements on commercial losses, suggesting 3 months back reporting could be extended to 12 months.	Defence to seek advice on how best to raise CRG concerns internally within the Department. NSW DPI to follow up with DHS Centrelink contact
4. Community feedback and issues (by exception)	Community CRG discussed feedback received on the last community drop-in event noting, their value to community and industry. Issues raised were the need to maintain contact with the community, but there will be a limbo situation until June 2016.	Drop-in event agreed for 17 Dec (TBC), Fern Bay Public School (with Salt Ash PS as back up), 4:00-6:30pm.

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	<p>Health advice provided by Professor Alison Jones to individuals was extremely valuable. Expectations of new information at each drop-in event present an issue going forward.</p> <p>EPA highlighted need for patience that community members may not have engaged yet, but the events are growing and word is spreading.</p> <p>Council is happy to continue to participate, albeit they are fielding more general Council concerns.</p> <p>A recent EcoNetwork meeting held at Salamander Bay highlighted as key issues: information and communication; need for a one-stop shop of Government information; and testing of eels and bass in Grahamstown Dam, WSRAG took these motions and concerns to Canberra.</p> <p>The CRG noted the motion for a Commonwealth Senate Inquiry is progressing, with oversighting Commonwealth agencies mentioned as an ideal Inquiry outcome. The resourcing impost on agencies participating in these inquiries was noted.</p>	<p>DPC to send emails formally thanking Professor O'Kane and Professor Jones for their involvement at community drop-in events.</p>
	<p>Community representatives raised serious concerns at Defence statements to Senate Committee that nothing is being done to stop surface water runoff from the base. This was supported by oyster farming representatives, given flow on to Tilligerry Creek.</p>	<p>Defence to obtain expert advice from their consultants, to be addressed through AECOM presentation.</p>
	<p>Community representatives also sought assurance Defence's 50 sampling wells around the base are not leaking into groundwater. Defence emphasised wells are hydraulically sealed, but advice to be sought, including possible presentation to next CRG.</p>	<p>Defence to provide information to EPA needed to ensure immediate containment.</p>
	<p>CRG noted red lines painted all over roads, confirmed as accurately depicting the investigation zone. No CRG agency or representative is aware of who is responsible.</p>	
	<p>Community representatives raised whether sampling activity occurs within the Ring Drain, given impacts on adjoining Fullerton Cove residences, confirming the Fourteen Foot Drain feeds into the ring drain.</p>	<p>EPA to update FAQs to account for need for possible future changes to the investigation area, and that future changes cannot be ruled out.</p>
	<p>Cor Disselkoen raised the possibility of algae and microbe use to remediate contaminants. Mr Disselkoen's laboratory contacts could be useful to explore opportunities.</p>	<p>Defence to supply details for contact and information sharing.</p>
	<p>Community representatives also raised the impact on RAMSAR wetlands. EPA advised the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is monitoring the situation and liaising with Expert Panel Water Subcommittee chair Will Glamore (University of NSW).</p>	

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	Industry Oyster farmers enquired as to the reason for time lags on returning results, and whether testing laboratory capacity issues are being addressed. Defence outlined that the time taken is to ensure standardisation of processes across laboratories, including verification sampling.	
5. Other business	Nil	
6. Future meetings	Next meeting to be held 10 December.	

Meeting closed 6.20pm

Next meeting 4:00 to 6:00 pm Thursday 10 December at Newcastle Airport Training Room.