

Endorsed Minutes

15 November 2018

Meeting: Williamtown Community Reference Group (CRG)

Date: 15 November 2018

Location: Murrook Culture Centre 2163 Nelson Bay Rd, Williamtown NSW 2318

Time: 3:30pm

Number: 1805

Chairperson: Melissa Gore | Deputy Director | Department of Premier and Cabinet

Secretariat: James Thomson | Senior Coordination Officer | Department of Premier and Cabinet

Attendees: Astrid Stephens | Senior Coordination Officer | Department of Premier and Cabinet

Group Captain Peter Cluff | RAAF Base Williamtown | Department of Defence

Chris Birrer | First Assistant Secretary | Department of Defence

Sarah Davis | Project Officer | Department of Defence

Nick Marshall | Salt Ash Community First

John Donahoo | Community Member

John Maretich | Asset Section Manager | Port Stephens Council

Michelle Butler | Senior Liaison Officer Williamtown | Department of Defence

Kim Smith | Salt Ash Community First

Lindsay Clout | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group

Dr Kat Taylor | Hunter New England Local Health District

Glenda Briggs | Regional Director, Hunter & Greater Sydney | Department of Industry

Carrie Ford | EPA

Danielle Playford | EPA

Bianca Morton | Williamtown PFAS Community Engagement Officer | EPA

Michelle Earnshaw | Community Member

Andrew McIntyre | Office of Environment & Heritage

Cain Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

Apologies: Adam Gilligan | Regional Director North | Environment Protection Authority | EPA

Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council

Nicola Powell | A/g Director, PFAS Taskforce, Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy
Karen Marler | Manager Hunter Region I EPA
Don Burgoyne | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer
Sue Walker | Community Member
Phil Blanch | Community Member and Fisher's Representative
Rob Gauta | Manager, Commercial Fishermen's Coop
Sharon Molloy | Office of Environment & Heritage
Sharon Nelmes | Department of Human Services
Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group

Number	Action Item	Responsible
1804-01	Provide information on grants available through the Commonwealth Department of Industry and Innovation for any small businesses.	PFAS Taskforce
1804-05	DPC to provide greater clarity in writing on the separation of utility payments and perceived impacts on educational provision within Salt Ash Public School.	DPC
1805-01	Community representatives to send out information in relation to PHN mental health services and gauge interest in other wellbeing programs for groups or couples.	Community representatives
1805-02	PHN to send out information to local accredited practitioners within the area to let them know about the counselling services.	PHN
1805-03	PHN to email a copy of the Fact Sheet to DPC to be distributed to the CRG.	PHN
1805-04	EPA to follow up on letter to Defence about data gaps identified in the 2016 HHRA and ERA	EPA
1805-05	AECOM to advise the CRG of the rabbit data in the GHD Report and why it may not have been used by the AECOM team. Defence can provide the response to the CRG on behalf of AECOM.	Defence
1805-06	Defence to provide an understanding of the scope of the PMAP. This includes if it is just for on the base or off the base and what is OEH and EPA's role in managing PFAS moving forward. Especially given the fragmented ownership of the drains.	Defence
1805-07	DPI to reconsider testing cattle in PFAS affected Management Zones and report back to CRG.	DPI

1805-08	Defence to advise what happens to residents who were connected to Hunter Water system in 2016, once the 3 year term begins ending in June 2019 for those residents connected	Defence
1805-09	Defence to pass onto Minister Fawcett's office the Williamtown community's interest in engaging with him.	Defence
1804-10	DPC to facilitate conversation between agencies to discuss messaging and advice on bore water and distribute it.	DPC
1804-11	DPC to follow up on issue of community garden out of session	DPC
1804-12	DPC to follow up with ANU for potential of alternative date for community consultations.	DPC
1804-13	DPC to confirm details of a pre-meeting with Professor Murphy and Professor Sim and send invite to CRG.	DPC

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair welcomed all attendees and gave an Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

2.1 20 September 2018

Kim Smith asked for a change to be made regarding 1801-07. Minutes have been changed to:

The water treatment plant at Lake Cochran receives storm water runoff and treats 25 litres per second at full speed. 9.5 mega litres per week is what is contracted, with water being discharged back into Lake Cochran and Dawson's drain. It was noted that the water treatment plant can't treat all PFAS.

Minutes were adopted and finalised.

2.2 Action Items – update as listed

1804-01 Nicola Powell to advise of assistance grants available through the Commonwealth Department of Industry and Innovation for any small businesses.

Chair noted that this is ongoing.

1804-05 DPC to provide greater clarity in writing on the separation of utility payments and perceived impacts on educational provision within Salt Ash Public School.

Nick Marshall asked for an update on water bills for the school. DPC to resend clarification.

3. Primary Health Network Presentation

Primary Health Network (PHN) distributed an information sheet to the CRG. The CRG were informed that PHN have counselling services available through Hunter Primary Care and community members

can self-refer to them. If people want to use another provider they can do so. External providers can talk to PHN to initiate this. Community members will receive six sessions however if more sessions are required, this can be arranged. If the CRG believe that there is need for other services, such as group or couple services, PHN could also consider funding these.

Action: Community representatives to send out information in relation to PHN mental health services and gauge interest in other wellbeing programs for groups or couples.

Action: PHN to send out information to local accredited practitioners within the area to let them know about the counselling services.

Action: PHN to email a copy of the Fact Sheet to DPC to be distributed to the CRG.

It was queried if the sessions included home visits. PHN noted that Hunter Primary Care has rooms in Medowie, however the community could approach a provider of choice and ask if they would provide home visits. The importance of distributing information to the network of local GPs was raised. The first step of accessing services is the most difficult step for community members and people need these services to be readily available. Community representatives raised the need for GPs to be proactive in their dialogue. PHN advised they have a monthly e-newsletter that can be used to distribute information to GPs and health groups within the area and that 'Support Now' is a 24 hour service. It was noted that it would be beneficial to have PHN at any future walk in events.

4. AECOM to provide an overview of the Ecological Risk Assessment

The AECOM Presentation is attached.

Amanda Lee (Technical Director, AECOM) gave an overview of the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA). Key points from the presentation include:

- The ERA's areas differed to those in the management zone as they are based on the habitats present
- There was no requirement to extend sampling to off base in the area north of RAAF Base Williamtown. Sampling in the northern area of the base showed the impacts were lower than other areas on the base, as these areas are further away from "source areas". The study was based on environmental understanding and typography of the main pathways of where contaminant leaves the base. E.g. Dawson's Drain. AECOM's scope of works for additional sampling and approach was overseen by the NSW EPA Expert Panel. A community representative raised that an EPA letter contradicted this and asked for it to be investigated.

Action: EPA to follow up on letter to Defence about data gaps identified in the 2016 HHRA and ERA

- The ERA conservatively assumes the animals stay in the management area for the entirety of their life and the animals have 100% of their diet made up of PFAS material. Given smaller body weight of animals than humans, the risk profile for animals is different to humans. Concern about this comparison was raised by community representatives.
- The ERA did not test all levels of the food chain of animals in the area as ethics approval for testing on animals can take a significant amount of time. It is the first time in Australia that this model has been done.
- Samples were taken from Rabbits during an on base cull, as well as worms and animals that reside in sediments which were collected on and off base. The muscle, liver and kidneys of the rabbits were tested.
- AECOM collected an increased amount of sediment (including more in Dawson's drain) and more soil samples for the EPA. Changes are identified on slide 10, as highlighted in orange.
- It was queried whether AECOM compared the rabbit data to the Stage 1 GHD Report in 2013

which, was claimed by community members, to have used rabbits north of the base.

Action: AECOM to advise the CRG of the rabbit data in the GHD Report and why it may not have been used by the AECOM team. Defence can provide the response to the CRG on behalf of AECOM.

- The Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) was based on a Total Daily Intake (TDI). THE ERA used two types of TDI for mammals and birds.
- The ERA looks at native animals, not domestic animals because the food sources of domestic animals can be controlled. Concern about domestic animals not being tested was expressed by community representatives.
- A query regarding the drains and the role of PMAP was raised.

Action: Defence to provide an understanding of the scope of the PMAP. This includes if it is just for on the base or off the base and what is OEH and EPA's role in managing PFAS moving forward. Especially given the fragmented ownership of the drains.

DPI was asked if the reason that they do not test cows for PFAS is the risk to export (and local) sales of Australian Beef. DPI noted that there is no regulatory limit for PFAS in food for any test results to be compared to. There are no restrictions on the movement or sale of any produce from PFAS contaminated areas because Food Standards Australia New Zealand has advised that it is extremely unlikely that the health of consumers outside affected areas are at risk. The NSW Government, however, continues to provide precautionary dietary advice for local residents who may consume a large amount of home grown produce.

DPI noted the NSW Expert Panels advice about the lack of consistent evidence of PFAS human or animal health in contaminated areas.

Community representatives expressed concern about the Governments advice and relying on modelled data. AECOM noted that at another PFAS site their modelling of PFAS in livestock correlated with beef serum test results. Hunter New England Health District noted that the risks of consuming meat from animals exposed to PFAS continues to be reviewed. A recommendation for DPI to test cattle the 'red zone' was made by a community representative. It was suggested that Leonard O'Connel's cattle (in the Secondary management zone) should be tested.

Action: DPI to reconsider testing cattle in PFAS affected Management Zones and report back to CRG.

The issue of dust as the source of high blood PFAS levels in local farmers was raised by community members. It was noted that the exposure risk of dust has been previously considered and reported on in detail and the EPA continues to advise that it is not an issue from a health perspective.

Concerns were raised that there is no new information in the ERA's findings. Defence was asked about the implementation of practical solutions, particularly in reducing the mass of PFAS contamination, and/or intercepting the migration pathway of the contamination from the source to a receptor. Defence responded with examples of treating ground water through the water treatment plant and digging up 5,000 cubic meters of soil in October and storing it to prevent PFAS leaching into the ground or surface water and off base. Defence noted the PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP) and their intention to present it to the CRG when it is available next year. Defence also noted a measure to install a borefield off site in the southern plume, extracting and returning ground water back onto base to be treated at the ECT2 Water Treatment Plant to below health based guidance values for drinking water. Defence will also present this at a CRG meeting next year.

5. Community Update / Issues

Defence was asked what happens to the water costs of two people in Fullerton Cove, whose three

year term of having water bills paid is expiring in June 2019.

Action: Defence to advise what happens to residents who were connected to Hunter Water system in 2016, once the 3 year term begins ending for those residents connected early in June 2019

Clarification was sought on the letter received from Minister Fawcett, specifically the last paragraph. "Given the current enquiry... Government has defined what changes may be made in response to PFAS Management". Defence noted these Reports will be tabled in Parliament and the Government will provide a response to the recommendations of the Committee. It was also reinforced that Minister Fawcett is now the Assistant Minister and has a responsibility to lead Defence's PFAS response. However, the PFAS Taskforce still sits under the Department of Energy and Environment which coordinates the whole of Government response to PFAS. It was queried if the Minister was a delegate for the F35 arrival on 10 December and if Defence could make representations about meeting with community members.

Action: Defence to pass onto Minster Fawcett's office the Williamtown community's interest in engaging with him.

A community representative noted that Acknowledgement of Country is undertaken at the beginning of each meeting. He also acknowledged the current landowners affected by PFAS contamination. The following statement outlining issues from community was read out which will be forwarded to Defence.

'At each meeting, we acknowledge the traditional owners of the surroundings lands. However, we should also acknowledge the plight of the existing PFAS affected landowners. I know of a case of one landowner who has developed diabetes which he blames on stress, of which the PFAS issue was a major contributing factor to that stress. Another landowner takes days to mentally recover every time he attends a meeting dealing with PFAS. He has attended numerous meetings with politicians and bureaucrats, and after each of these meetings, no action occurs. The Federal Government has caused the PFAS problem, and after three years they have done nothing of substance to fix that problem. Accordingly, the actions and inactions of the Federal Government are deemed by the local community to be unjust, indecent and immoral. Chris Birrer was requested, and he agreed, to pass on the foregoing sentiments to his political masters.'

Defence was asked since they claim to have solutions available for storage and removal of water and the PFAS in it, can they answer in a yes or no answer as to whether PFAS contaminated water is still exiting the base via the drainage network. Defence responded that it was.

Community representatives advised that some community members have had bore water test results above the recommended guidelines. It was noted by community representatives that they have the right to take whatever precautions they feel necessary to protect their health. In response Defence outlined that bore water should be used in line with EPA guidelines. Community representatives advocated that EPA's advice should be amended to not using bore water at all. EPA reiterated that community members should follow the precautionary advice.

Action: DPC to facilitate conversation between agencies to discuss messaging and advice on bore water and distribute it.

A response about the school's utilities bills was sought with a response requested in writing. It was also noted that there was an outstanding out of session question regarding the overuse of copper pipes.

A community representative advised that there were still outstanding questions about the community garden. It was reinforced that the community representatives of the CRG were not supportive of this

initiative to grow vegetables within the Williamtown Management Area. A community representative noted that he had two enquiries from journalists and they want to ridicule the community for supporting such a proposal. It was raised that the community are also concerned about the community garden.

Action: DPC to follow up on issue of community garden out of session

6. Agency updates: by exception

6.2 Defence

An update in relation to a hard copy hand out around the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range (available online) was given. The results of this investigation now close off questions about another PFAS source at Salt Ash. It was reinforced that all of the information is available on the website.

6.3 NSW EPA

No formal update from the EPA.

6.4 NSW Health

No formal update, but a reminder was given that ANU will be hosting community consultations at the end of November. An issue was raised regarding the date of these consultations as the hearing date for the class action is scheduled for 26 November.

Action: DPC to follow up with ANU for potential of alternative date for community consultations.

6.7 Port Stephens Council

Council advised that there will be some spraying on Cabbage Tree Road in the coming weeks. The CRG asked if residents could be notified and Port Stephens Council advised that residents and neighbours will be notified as per standard practice. Outcomes of the Drainage Study was queried and it was noted that there was no further action than what was recorded in the minutes. A copy of the study is on the Defence website.

6.8 DPC

The Chair noted that ANU are coming to Williamtown as per Kat Taylor's earlier information. It was also noted that the Department of Human Services are welcoming of any well-being ideas for the community. Additionally, the Department of Health will be holding a community information session for Williamtown and the surrounding areas on 3 December to provide findings of the expert panel. In addition to this Professor Murphy and Professor Sim have also offered to meet with the Williamtown Community Reference Group (CRG) on the afternoon of 3 December 2018, prior to the community consultation. Advertising will occur to the broader community about the community information sessions. Community representatives advised they would like to meet prior to the information session.

Action: DPC to confirm details of a pre-meeting with Professor Murphy and Professor Sim and send invite to CRG.

7. Future Communications Discussion

The Chair acknowledged efforts of agencies to bring presentations to the CRG. Feedback was sought from community members on the value of the key messages document sent out after the last

meeting. The Chair also queried if this resource was being shared with the broader community. Community representatives advised that they could share it on social media, however links to the document are preferred over PDF for ease of access.

Some community representatives raised that they often do not distribute material to the broader community because they do not believe the information contained within it. A community representative also raised a concern about sharing material on the business social pages, but does inform the industry she represents. It was noted that if a community representative is based in the community and represents others based in the community, they are entitled to attend the CRG. All members were reminded of the Terms of Reference. Defence also noted the importance of the Defence industry in the Williamtown community and that they are also part of the community.

8. General Business

No general business items were raised.

9. Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held on the 17th of January 2019.

Meeting closed 5:42pm.