

Endorsed Minutes 20 September 2018

Meeting: Williamtown Community Reference Group (CRG)
Date: 20 September 2018
Location: Murrook Culture Centre 2163 Nelson Bay Rd, Williamtown NSW 2318
Time: 3:30pm
Number: 1804

Chairperson: Jodie Calvert | Deputy Director & CRG Chair | Department of Premier and Cabinet

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

Attendees: Karen Marler | Director Hunter Region | EPA

Dr Kat Taylor | Hunter New England Local Health District

Group Captain Peter Cluff | Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO), RAAF Base Williamtown | Department of Defence

Chris Birrer | First Assistant Secretary | Department of Defence

Michelle Butler | Senior Liaison Officer Williamtown | Department of Defence

Sarah Davis | Project Officer | Department of Defence

Nick Marshall | Salt Ash Community First

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

Wayne Wallis | General Manager | Port Stephens Council

Nicola Powell | A/g Director, PFAS Taskforce | Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy

Phil Blanch | Community Member and Fisher's Representative

Glenda Briggs | Regional Director | Department of Industry

John Donahoo | Community Member

Melissa Gore | Senior Coordination Officer | Department of Premier and Cabinet

Sue Walker | Community Member

Kim Smith | Salt Ash Community First

Sharon Nelmes, Community Liaison Officer, Department of Human Services

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

Prof David Durrheim | Hunter New England Local Health District

Don Burgoyne | NSW Farmer's Association | Community Member & Oyster Farmer

Cain Gorfine | President, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group

Bianca Morton | Williamtown PFAS Community Engagement Officer | EPA
 Andrew McIntyre | Manager, Major Projects | Office of Environment & Heritage
 Justin Hamilton | Fullerton Cove Action Group & Williamtown Salt Ash Flood Group
 Leanne Sansom | Community Member
 Sharon Molloy | Office of Environment & Heritage
 Rob Gauta | Manager, Commercial Fishermen's Coop
 Michelle Earnshaw | Community Member

Number	Action Item	Responsible	Due Date
1704-02	Chris Birrer to follow up with both the PM Office and Minister for Defence regarding the letter written by Lindsay Clout	Defence	15.10.18
1803-09	PFAS Taskforce to seek information about loan guarantees or other types of loan supports.	PFAS Taskforce	Ongoing
1804-01	PFAS Taskforce to provide information to the CRG on Commonwealth Government grants available to small-medium businesses.	PFAS Taskforce	15.10.18
1804-02	Defence to provide a PFAS groundwater and soil sample result from 7 PFAS source areas on Base.	Defence	15.10.18
1804-03	Information to be provided by PSC in relation to changes in levy banks.	PSC	15.10.18
1804-04	DPC to advise the Community on the feasibility of a Drainage Working Group	DPC OEH PSC	15.10.18
1804-05	DPC to provide greater clarity on the separation of utility payments and perceived impacts on educational provision within Salt Ash Public School.	DPC	15.10.18
1804-06	DPC to contact CRG members regarding community suggestions for consideration.	DPC	15.10.18
1804-07	EPA had been omitted from the process document under "advisory agencies". DPC to ensure EPA is added.	DPC	15.10.18

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair welcomed all attendees and gave an Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

2.1 26 July 2018

Minutes adopted and finalised.

2.2 Action Items – update as listed

1704-02 Letter to Prime Minister's Office from Mr Lindsay Clout

Chris Birrer advised this would now have to be referred to the new Minister for Defence.

Action: Chris Birrer to follow up with Minister's office

1803-09 PFAS Taskforce Loan Guarantees

Nicola Powell advised that Loan Guarantees have not previously been provided to individuals that she is aware of. However, there are other types of assistance available to small businesses, through Commonwealth Government grants programs.

Action: PFAS Taskforce to provide information to the CRG on Commonwealth Government grants available to small-medium businesses.

3. Update on seven PFAS source areas and water treatment plants Action 1801-07

Defence provided an update. Presentation included. Attachment 1

Questions from the community and discussion

Nick Marshall asked if there are more landfill sites. Chris Birrer advised that there were other landfill sites, but that these were not identified in the investigation as significant source areas.

SLIDE ON WATER TREATMENT PLANT:

ECT 2 Plants. Kim Smith asked about drain operating hours. Chris Birrer advised that the Moors Drain treatment plant averaged 3 litres per second. Defence is working to increase this to 6-8 litres per second.

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.

Kim Smith asked why PFAS levels are rising if this water is being treated? Chris Birrer noted that it is expected that PFAS levels could change overtime due to PFAS moving in the aquifer. The variation in sampling results can be up to 20%. Kim Smith was concerned about levels rising and advised Defence that testing had shown increased levels on her property. Kim Smith restated her question that if these plants are working why are levels going up? Chris Birrer advised that a sample is only a point in time sample. Nick Marshall stated the levels are consistently going up, not down. Defence advised they have not seen any consistent trend of results increasing in Salt Ash. John Donahoo

noted that an engineering study is needed. Kat Taylor stated that the Defence Ongoing Monitoring Plan should include sampling to show whether the plants are working.

John Donahoo asked how long will it take to convert the red areas on the map to orange? Chris Birrer replied anywhere from a few years to decades. Upon questioning about the movement of contaminated soil around the base Chris Birrer noted that the removal of soil will be contained in a specially designed stockpile in another location on base until it could be treated or transported to a licensed facility.

Action: Defence to provide testing results of contamination levels in the soil around the 7 PFAS source areas on base.

Lindsay Clout asked whether there was an ability to match the flow of water with the water being treated by the Moors Drain Water Treatment Plant, with Chris Birrer advising that this might not be feasible due to the fluctuations in water levels in the drain. Lindsay Clout advised that clearing the drains out would accelerate PFAS movement. Chair asked if there is any ability to monitor that? Chris Birrer noted that there is one more report to release, being the Final Ecological Risk Assessment Report.

A Community Walk In Session will be held upon the release of this Report. Part of that process will include the Ongoing Monitoring Plan which will monitor and track the extent of PFAS contamination. Nick Marshall asked the Question whether during rainfall events, does the storm water get diverted and whether more retention ponds can be built near where the football field is now? Chris Birrer noted that at this point in time, one of Defence's main goals is the treatment of the water flowing off the base. Defence continues to look at options to limit migration pathways for PFAS.

4. Drainage Report Umwelt

Umwelt provided an update. Presentation included. Attachment 2.

Questions from the community and discussion surrounding the Umwelt Drainage Report:

John Donahoo made reference to page 44 of the Report relating to a property where a levy was removed many years ago. John Donahoo asked whether Council proposed a detailed design for a levy to be constructed to perform the necessary engineering works to ensure flooding stops occurring every 3 years. PSC will take the Question on Notice.

Action: Information to be provided by PSC in relation to changes in levy banks.

Umwelt emphasised the accuracy of their model. Lindsay Clout said he finds comfort in the Report and the concerns it raises about knee jerk reactions to improve drain performance, given the complexities that exist. Nick Marshall asked whether developments on the base were taken into account. Umwelt advised that the topography was accounted for as well as the changing characteristics of the land. Phil Blanch asked whether the length of time for flood waters to recede was taken into account. Umwelt said it did take this into account, and more importantly looked at the behavior of the local catchment.

Chair asked what is next for the Report? Chris Birrer noted that due to the fragmented ownership of the drains, the report had been passed onto Agencies and others that are responsible.

Nick Marshall asked if a group of Agencies will get together to work on a solution. The Chair agreed to ask next steps of Agencies and provide feedback to the community.

Kim Smith asked if Council will support residents and not develop the land? Wayne Wallis

acknowledged the development application process will deal with these concerns in conjunction with Agencies. Chair noted all parties will need time to review the Report and that other agencies also have to assess future developments of the land.

Action: DPC to advise the Community on next steps in relation to the Umwelt Report, including the feasibility of a Drainage Working Group.

5. Community Update / Issues

Kim Smith:

Kim Smith raised the lack of mental health support in the community and the growing concerns as to how this would be addressed?

It was also requested whether people could access their own psychologist.

Sharon Nelmes advised there are local counselling services available, for example counselling through Hunter Primary Care. Sharon has consulted with the Department of Health regarding the request for private counselling sessions to be reimbursed however, they are currently prioritising the Parliamentary Enquiry submissions. Sharon has had ongoing consultation with PHN around them funding private psychology services. PHN have advised this is a possibility however, they have requested a formal letter from the CRG with regards to this request.

Kat Taylor noted Hunter New England Health Mental Health services are still available. Kat Taylor also noted GP mental health plans can refer to a psychologist, but noted that limited consults are available PHN advised they can look into funding individuals personal psychologists. They asked for a formal letter from Kim Smith. Sharon Nelmes spoke to Health around counselling services and they advised that they are working on the enquiry submissions.

Kim Smith asked if community members can access their own psychologist but have the PHN pay for the visits. The Chair offered to discuss this with NSW Health and Department of Human Services. Kat Taylor asked what issues with ‘Support Now’ had occurred. The community have advised they have been hung up on.

Nick Marshall

Nick Marshall advised that a member of the community expressed disappointment that Salt Ash public school have had to pay their water bills, unlike residents, and now that money is not being spent on kids at the school. \$6,000 water bill.

The Chair advised that payment of utilities does not impact on the level of educational support provided to the children. That these payments are made from a very different budget and that there is no need to be concerned that an impact is occurring. Chair will seek greater clarification from the Department of Education on this matter to provide to the community.

Action: DPC to provide greater clarity on the separation of utility payments and perceived impacts on educational provision within Salt Ash Public School.

John Donahoo

John Donahoo noted organisationally no one seems to be in charge and that the PFAS issue will go on for decades. He reiterated that there should be one person in charge of running the whole thing. He also questioned why there hasn't been an engineering option study commissioned? John Donahoo will provide information to Defence as to what should be looked at.

Lindsay Clout

Lindsay Clout asked about the movement of containers off the base and community concerns that the treatment plants were being removed? Chris Birrer replied that containers are not being removed. There is always a level of construction and activity occurring on base that may concern the community but they can be assured that the water treatment plants are still in place and active. The Chair noted that this information could be provided in a proposed communique that will be developed by DPC.

6. Agency updates: by exception

6.1 Defence

Chris Birrer acknowledged Lindsay Clout's presence at the Public Enquiry, providing a strong representation from the community's perspective. Lindsay Clout noted it was a turning point to see the whole picture with the involvement of all other Commonwealth agencies.

6.2 PFAS Taskforce, Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE)

Nicola Powell advised that the National Health & Medical Research Council had released a fact sheet on drinking water guideline values for PFOA and the sum of PFOS and PFHxS, on 27th August, which the Taskforce sent to NSW DPC for distribution to the CRG. She also advised that the NHMRC consultation on guidelines for managing risks in recreational water opened on 9 August and closes Thursday 27 September, if any of the community would like to comment. Chair advised of the reference to that later in the Agenda.

No comments or questions were raised about the Taskforce structure and role documents provided under actions arising from the previous meeting.

6.3 Department of Human Services.

Sharon Nelmes advised that "Community Helping Community" group is holding a movie night on the 13th October at Salt Ash Church, which will be a fundraiser for Salt Ash Public School. The Group is also planning a Community Garden. Detailed plans for the garden have been reviewed by the NSW PFAS Expert Panel and the NSW EPA and both agencies are supportive of the garden going ahead.

Concerns were raised regarding the mixed messages associated with current precautionary advice regarding "not eating fruit and vegetables out of backyard gardens" and the community group being able to establish a community garden. EPA advised that the community garden would be established in raised beds using external soil brought in specifically for the garden's use and watered using reticulated water. The EPA noted that the NSW Expert Panel had been consulted on the community garden concept and they were supportive.

The Chair emphasised that it is important to focus on a positive for the community but understood the need for clear messaging about the differences in current precautionary advice and the establishment of the community garden.

Chair mentioned bus shelters and Port Stephens Council following up with RMS. Chair would like to see the list of positive ideas the community has put forward. Kim noted she is not against it. Karen advised that she acknowledges the confusion, but there are ways to manage it. Other positive initiatives include guest speakers on various topics linking with the community, which would be advertised on Facebook.

There were a number of other suggestions raised by other members of the CRG. The Chair asked

that these be forwarded to DPC for consideration/action.

Action: DPC to contact CRG members regarding community suggestions for consideration.

6.4 NSW EPA

Karen Marler advised that Mr David Gathercole, NSW Manager Strategic Regulation Environmental Health & Hazardous Incidents Branch, NSW Environment Protection Authority or his representative will be the official EPA representative into the future. However, Karen Marler will continue to come to meetings as required.

7. CRG Meeting CRG Meeting Process, including Terms of Reference, code of conduct, minute taking and responding to out of session question protocol.

Minute taking:

Chair discussed the recording of the meetings, as suggested by some CRG members. The Chair advised that after reviewing the CRG Terms of Reference, seeking advice from the Steering Committee and the Australian Institute of Governance, it was concluded that meeting will not be audio recorded. The minutes come out after each meeting as a draft, seeking feedback from each CRG member. It is on these occasions that members have the right to ask for amendments or make comments.

Out of session questions and timeliness of responses to these from the Agencies:

The Chair advised that an out-of-session questions process had been developed, with the expectation that this be followed into the future. The process in short is for any questions to be directed to the relevant Agency directly with a copy to DPC. The Chair advised that DPC will send out an updated copy of the out of session questions as a log before each meeting.

Action: EPA had been omitted from the process document under "advisory agencies". DPC to ensure EPA is added.

8. Future Communications

DPC will develop a discussion paper for feedback. DPC will revive the Key Messages document that will include significant outcomes of each CRG meeting as well as other items that agencies may wish to include.

The distribution of this communique will be through the NSW EPA, Defence and PSC email lists, as well as hard copies being placed at well frequented landmarks such as Paul's corner, Salt Ash Public School, the local pre-school and Oakvale Farm.

Kim Smith suggested that this could also be placed in the "news of the area" publication.

9. General Business

The Chair noted that this would be her last CRG meeting due to taking retirement. DPC will still continue to chair with the CRG being notified who will undertake that role. Jodie Calvert thanked all CRG members for their ongoing commitment to the CRG over the past three years.

10. Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held on the 15th of November 2018.

Meeting closed 5:42pm.