

PFAS Sub-Committee of the JSCFADT – Ongoing Scrutiny of PFAS Remediation

National PFAS Investigation and Management Plan

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to make a submission to the PFAS Sub-Committee of the joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, regarding the PFAS contamination clean-up at Williamstown.

This submission will be focused on off Base clean-up, where, now five years on from the contamination announcement, very little has been achieved in clean up and remediation off Base to date.

We recognise the principle focus needed to be on Base and are well aware of the major work underway to stop the spread at the source.

Our community voice has been strong and consistent from day one. That this singular approach of only on Base clean-up was insufficient in dealing with off Base contamination and continually called for an off Base clean up to run in parallel to the on Base activity.

There is a great deal of frustration within our community due to the major restrictions placed on us as a result of the declared contamination zones, primarily Rural properties that are not fit for purpose, suffering property value loss and financial lending institutions unable to support us.

This frustration is highlighted by no off Base clean-up activity what soever. The Red Line on a map that surrounds us has not changed and does not look like changing in the foreseeable future. This inaction is the major cause of the deteriorating mental health in our community.

Following is our proposed remedy to deal with this stagnation.

1. Develop a Management Plan for off Base PFAS Contamination Clean Up and Remediation. This Plan (PMP) to include all Governments, Government Agencies and Local Government and cover Drains, Soil, Water Bodies, Airborne Transmission, Dust, Disposal, Communication, with the aim to removing the RED ZONE.
2. Appoint a Co-ordinator General to implement and oversee the PMP, (See Recommendation 1 of parliamentary Inquiry Report).
3. The PMP to include but not limited by the following:-
 - a. NSW State Government
 - i. Change Planning structures from Rural Zoning (we discussed this with the Premier on 19th December 2017)
 - ii. Engage with lending institutions to resolve lending embargo.
 - b. NSW EPA
 - i. Develop a Management Plan to reduce contamination zones i.e. remove Red Line on map. EPA to take ownership of clean up leaching off Base and manage outcomes with public institutions to clean up public lands.
 - c. Port Stephens Council- Newcastle Council
 - i. Local Government Remediation Plan to test and clean all Council lands – parks, playgrounds, sport fields, - with attention to sites that have been irrigated with contaminated ground water.
 - ii. Remove Red Zone from 149 Certificates (also known as 10.7 (2 &5) Certificates)
 - d. Commonwealth Health
 - i. Update Health advice consistent with overseas Health data.
 - ii. Restore PFAS Blood testing programme. Start round 2 compare samples (independent of Defence – people don't trust Defence)
 - iii. Ongoing mental health support.
 - iv. Future fund for future health impacts.
 - e. Department of Defence
 - i. Continue funding town water usage costs until the Red Zone removed.
 - ii. Begin to re-build community trust that has been destroyed. Proactive not reactive, like street tree planting suburbs and bike paths and an apology.
 - f. CSIRO
 - i. Develop container size water treatment plant for targeted off Base ground water treatment to remove PFAS.
 - g. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)
Develop and implement a PFAS testing programme for testing and monitoring locally produced food stuffs, providing accurate, detailed and timely information enabling local producers to return to consuming their produce.

COMMUNICATION

With the premature disbanding of our Community Reference Group which enabled community representatives to have face to face communication with defence, State and Local Government and State Agencies, our community feels abandoned. We propose that strong community communication be include in the Task Force agenda.

Please engage with us, the knowledge and guidance our community can provide will be beneficial.

CONCLUSION

To summarise the process, our people want their lands back, their life back, the Red Line removed and that we will be supported into the future with health impacts arising from our exposure to this chemical.

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