Key community messages from meeting of 12 November 2015

- The sixth meeting of the Williamtown Contamination Investigation CRG was held on 12 November.

- The meeting was the first for Air Vice Marshall (AVM) Greg Evans as Defence’s newly appointed local response coordinator and spokesperson in relation to the Williamtown contamination investigation. AVM Evans will also play a broader role coordinating the Defence responses in relation to RAAF installations throughout Australia.

- The Department of Defence has confirmed that five positive detection results have been hand delivered to landowners by AVM Evans. This brings the total number of positive detections of PFOS/PFOA so far to seven. The total number of tests which have recorded ‘nil detections’ for PFOA/PFOS now stands at 41.

- Sampling is continuing at the rate of ten bores per day although the rate of testing is lower due to laboratory limitations. Further results will be provided to landowners as testing of those samples is completed.

- The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has received the proposed Sampling and Quality Plan (SAQP) from Defence for consideration. This is part of negotiations for the proposed Defence sampling program that aims to provide the level of data needed to produce a robust Human Health Risk Assessment.

- While negotiations continue, Defence is continuing with its sampling program based on their current proposal of more than 900 samples. Community information on the proposed sampling program will be updated for distribution as soon as possible.

- Community and industry CRG members welcome Commonwealth financial assistance for commercial fishers, but are calling for expanded eligibility to include land-based agriculture, and oyster farmers suffering brand damage impacts. The CRG has requested Defence provide feedback on the package to Government decision makers.

- Community representatives also raised the loss of flow-on business more broadly within the Williamtown and surrounding areas, highlighting the need for potential financial assistance. Port Stephens Council is investigating how best to measure business impacts through their Economic Development Unit. The CRG also noted a possible future role for the Small Business Commission in providing support services.

- Defence is working on a treatment and remediation regime for water and soil sourced from the RAAF base. This practice will be implemented as part of current base developments under way.

- Discussions are ongoing between the Environmental Protection Authority, Port Stephens Council and the NSW Office of Water regarding the dewatering of private development sites. Issues identified will be fed into the Expert Panel for their consideration of appropriate responses.
Port Stephens Council has commenced notification of sites as being part of the contamination investigation area through Section 149(5) planning certificates. Section 149(5) certificates previously issued without this notification are being retrospectively notified. Council is also seeking advice from the EPA on whether further notification of individual sites as ‘registered contaminated sites’ is required.

Preliminary results of the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) first round of fish sampling program are finalised and have been posted to the EPA website at: http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamtown.htm (refer Test Results and Background Information). Sampling of school prawns finalised last week, with the outcomes of analysis for consumption expected imminently.

NSW DPI collection of samples is ongoing for 10 further species from across the Hunter and Port Stephens estuaries, including from two control environments.

The next community drop-in information events will be held on **Thursday 19 November at Salt Ash Public School (4:30-7:00pm)**. In addition to services provided at previous information days, this event will include:

- visits from Professor Mary O’Kane (NSW Chief Scientist) who leads the independent Expert Panel, and Professor Alison Jones to provide clinical support and advice to individuals seeking health advice for themselves and dependents
- a business advisor from the NSW Small Business Commission
- psychological first aid counselling from the Red Cross
- representatives from Centrelink to assist with income support applications from commercial fishers.

Defence and NSW agencies will continue to produce and distribute updates to FAQs to the CRG as soon as possible. The CRG will also explore ways to efficiently share information through coordination of notices via social media amongst CRG member organisations.

The next meeting of the Williamtown Contamination Investigation CRG will be held on Thursday 26 November 2015.

The EPA information portal continues to provide the latest updates and developments on the government response and CRG activities, including meeting summaries, links to frequently asked questions and other key links to assist the community. [http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/mediainformation/community-reference-williamtown.htm](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/mediainformation/community-reference-williamtown.htm)

Further information on current EPA and NSW Government activities in Williamtown can be found at: [http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamtown.htm](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/MediaInformation/williamtown.htm)