

**Submission
No 9**

**INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO PFAS CONTAMINATION
IN WATERWAYS AND DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES
THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Mr Paul Rooms and Dr Michael Walton

Date Received: 24 November 2024

**Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water
Supplies Throughout New South Wales**

Written Submission

**Mr Paul Rooms and Dr Michael Walton
Pacific Dunes, Medowie, New South Wales**

Having carefully read the Terms of Reference for written submissions to the *Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales*, this submission raises multiple concerns regarding PFAS contamination, variously adversely impacting communities surrounding the Williamtown RAAF Base.

Such contamination we allege has substantively emanated from Australian Federal Government's Williamtown RAAF Base and more broadly contamination arising from the long term conduct of Australian Defence operating in and around Williamtown, Campvale, Medowie, Tilligerry Peninsula, Salt Ash, Bobs Farm and Fullerton Cove.

Since the late 1990s, Mr Paul Rooms has raised his ongoing contamination and water safety concerns with Hunter Water. And over the years with local Federal parliamentary representative, MP The Hon Meryl Swanson, Paterson and State parliamentary representative, MP The Hon Kate Washington, Port Stephens. Ms Washington is also Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion and a senior member of the NSW Labor Government.

We suggest MP Swanson and Minister Washington have failed to reasonably address or take up Mr Rooms' PFAS contamination concerns. We further allege woeful and neglectful conduct of Hunter Water and Newcastle NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

Terms of Reference



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PFAS CONTAMINATION IN WATERWAYS AND DRINKING
WATER SUPPLIES THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES

Inquiry into PFAS contamination in waterways and drinking water supplies throughout New South Wales

TERMS OF REFERENCE

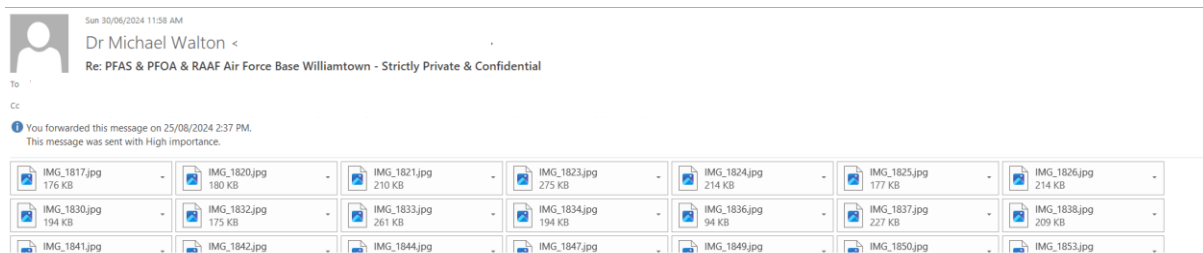
1. That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination in waterways and drinking water supplies throughout New South Wales, and in particular:
 - (a) the adequacy and extent of monitoring and data collection on PFAS levels in waterways and drinking water sources
 - (b) the adequacy of the reporting and disclosure requirements to the public of monitoring and findings on PFAS contamination of water
 - (c) the identification of communities at risk from PFAS contamination
 - (d) the adequacy and effectiveness of government engagement with and support for communities disproportionately affected by PFAS contamination, including First Nations communities
 - (e) sources of exposure to PFAS, including through historic and current firefighting practices
 - (f) the health, environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of PFAS
 - (g) the impacts, monitoring and mitigation of contamination on livestock, domestic animals and wildlife, including water birds, fish and other aquatic life
 - (h) the structure, capacity, capability and resourcing of New South Wales Government agencies and water utilities to detect, monitor, report on, respond to and mitigate against PFAS contamination of water supplies, including the adequacy of infrastructure and resources
 - (i) the adequacy and effectiveness of New South Wales's legislative and regulatory framework in testing for, monitoring, mitigating and responding to PFAS contamination, including the adequacy of health-based guidance values, as compared to the standards and practices of other Australian and international jurisdictions
 - (j) public sector resourcing and coordination amongst relevant agencies in preventing, controlling and managing the risks of PFAS to human health and the environment
 - (k) international best practices for water treatment and filtration, and the environmentally sound management and safe disposal of PFAS

- (l) the effectiveness of remediation works on specific sites and international best practices for remediation and management of contaminated sites
 - (m) areas for reform, including legislative, regulatory, public health and other policy measures to prevent, control and manage the risks of PFAS in water supplies
 - (n) the impact of taking contaminated water sources offline on water security, including the effects of diverting water between communities; the social, economic and logistical implications of such diversions, and the challenges posed by PFAS contamination to water availability, drought management and emergency supply planning, and
 - (o) any other related matters.
2. That the committee report by 20 June 2025.

Pacific Dunes

Dr Michael Walton wrote to MP Cate Faerhmann, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW Parliament on 30 June 2024, regarding continuing frustration about alleged government, bureaucratic and organisational inaction, obfuscation, prevarication, misinformation, disinformation and neglectfully turning a blind eye.

Dr Walton also copied in the following federal and state politicians, for which we received no investigative response or knowledge of reasonable action.



In Dr Walton's email to Ms Faerhmann, he raised concerns about PFAS and PFOA contamination inside and outside the so called contaminated 'red zone' that surrounds the RAAF Base Williamtown.

Dr Walton noted that recently, water appears to have been allegedly pumped for hours on end, from surrounding swamp land/pond at Pacific Dunes Golf Course/estate. Unnatural frothing was observed to be occurring across multiple areas and water seemed to be on the move. Additionally, Dr Walton advised Mr Rooms had detailed knowledge of water flow through out Pacific Dunes and beyond, including into nearby Grahamstown Dam water supply.

When Mr Rooms attempted to gain a water sample from the described body of water, the water was observed to decidedly move away from the catchment container. It further caused a skin irritation to Mr Rooms' hands and for some time thereafter.

Dr Walton expressed zero confidence in Hunter Water, Water NSW, NSW EPA or Australian Defence to transparently manage this matter, as is the case for local council, state, federal representatives or local media. Mr Rooms had long communicated to Minister Kate Washington MP and Meryl Swanson MP, his

alleged and reported concerns and knowledge on PFAS and PFOA contamination surrounding RAAF Base Williamtown.

Unfortunately, we also had no confidence in Australian class action lawyers to adequately represent or reasonably compensate vulnerable Australians directly and variously affected by PFAS and PFOA contamination, allegedly emanating from the RAAF Base Williamtown, either above and/or below ground. Including, alleged contamination impacting real estate values, personal health, quality of life, businesses, agriculture, horticulture, drinking water, natural environment and wildlife.

Over the past 10 years, Mr Rooms has developed an expert knowledge of PFAS and PFOA and is very aware of international best practice and the latest peer reviewed science, and the alleged conduct of Hunter Water or lack thereof.

Photos of frothing water are attached.







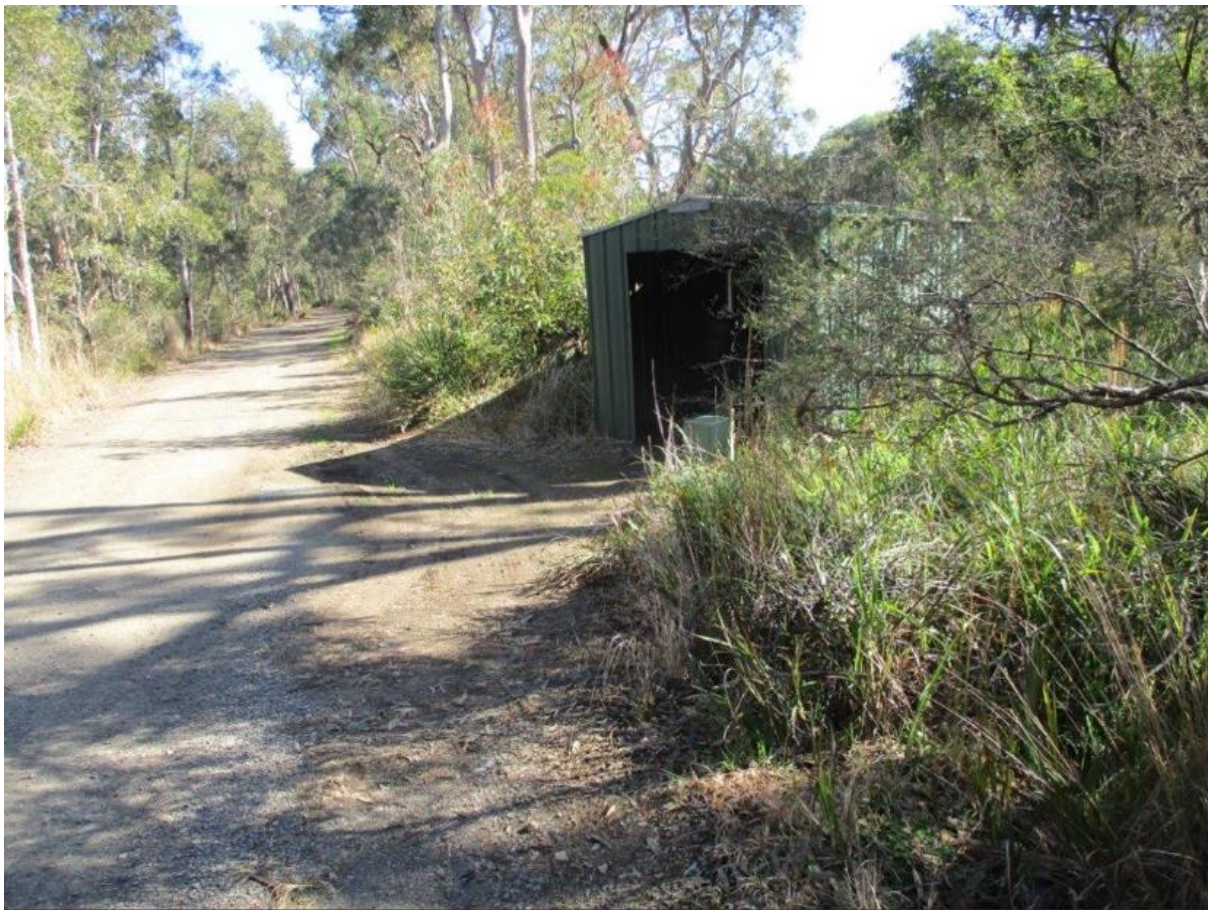


















We purchased our current home in December 2019, with the full knowledge and assurance that the residential property is located outside the described PFAS contaminated red zone. Our home is located at

. As indicated by the blue arrows detailed in the photographs below. And we continue to renovate and landscape our home/property, which is regarded for its size and location as one of premier properties in the area.





There are multiple water bodies – natural and manmade that are located over Pacific Dunes and in and around our home.



In recent years, we have become concerned that Pacific Dunes may be variously impacted by PFAS and PFOA contamination. Additionally, we became concerned that we may be being continually exposed to PFAS airborne contamination from water that is continually sprayed to the side and front of our home, from either bore water or storage water bodies, that are needed to water the 18-hole course - golf tees, fairways and greens. Specifically, tenth and eleven hole surrounding our residence.

The water spray drifts significantly depending upon wind speed and is more impactful as the local climate becomes more variable and unstable.







Over the years, we have become increasingly concerned about a significant flow of water under the Championship Drive road, that is located in front of our home. And potentially water flow that is supplied from Grahamstown Dam. We wonder whether unmetered Grahamstown Dam town water is being used to lower potential contamination levels in water bodies that are required to water the golf course.

Furthermore, it is unknown the impact of potentially contaminated water on wildlife. However, Mr Rooms observed previously that several carp that had been introduced into the water body out from the Pacific Dunes Golf Club House had developed unnatural facial lesions/growths. The fish are presumed to have since died, as they have not been seen in recent months.





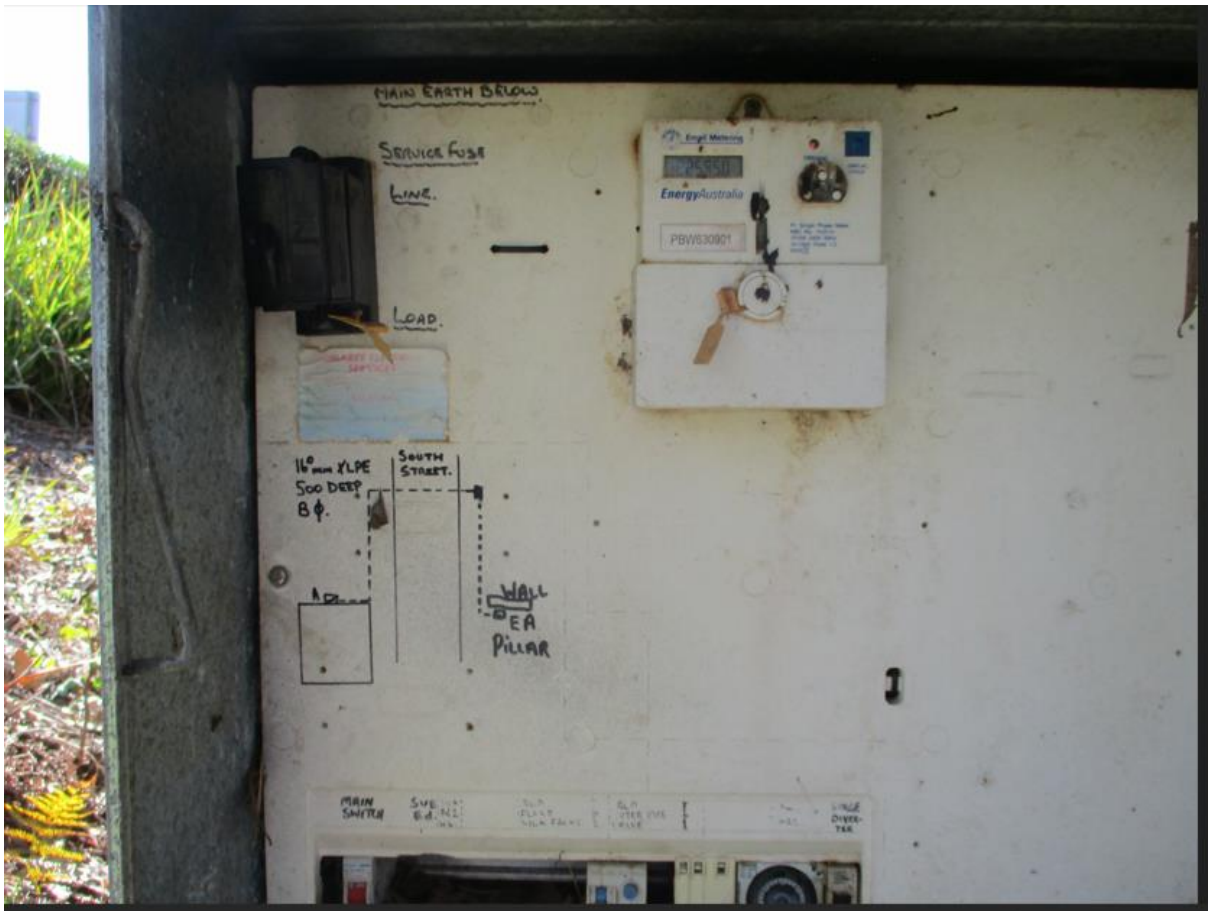
There are various water pumping stations across the golf course in states of differential repair. It is unclear what water is being accurately metered, from where it is being sourced – storage ponds, bore water or town water. And the level of PFAS contamination – hazardous levels of otherwise.

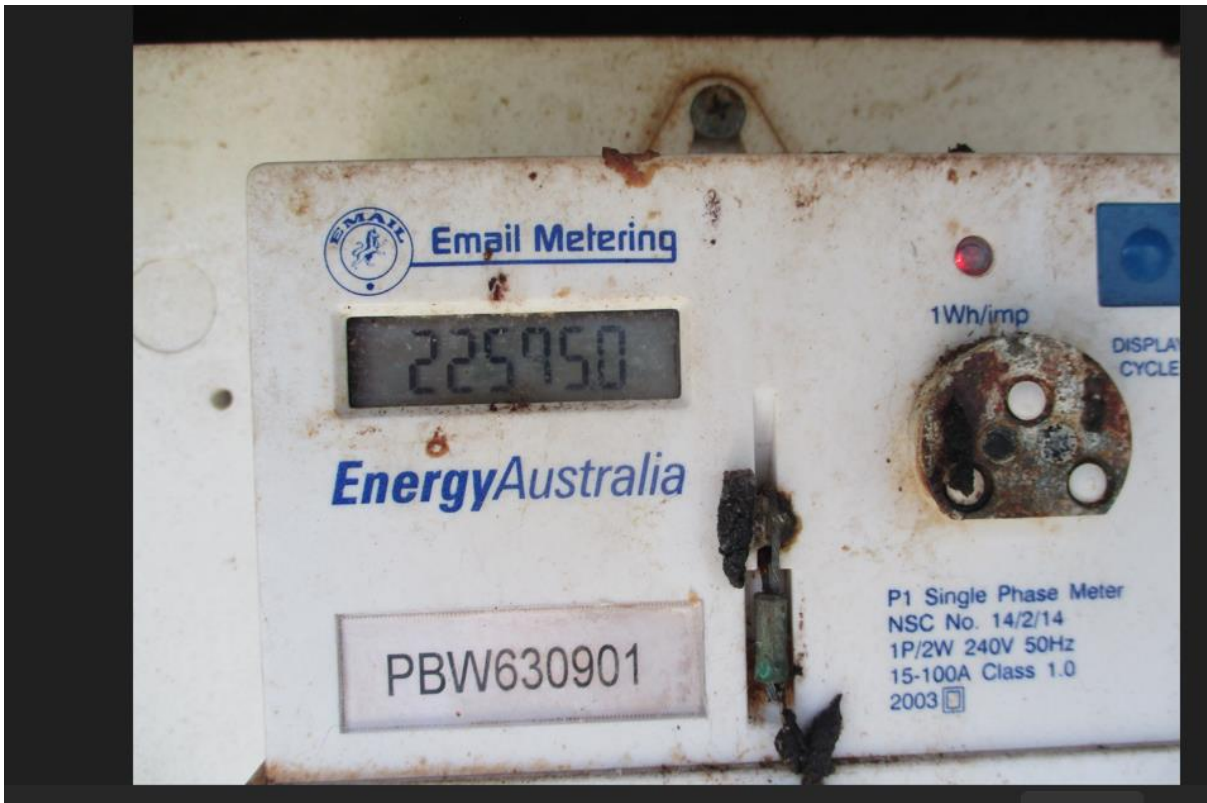


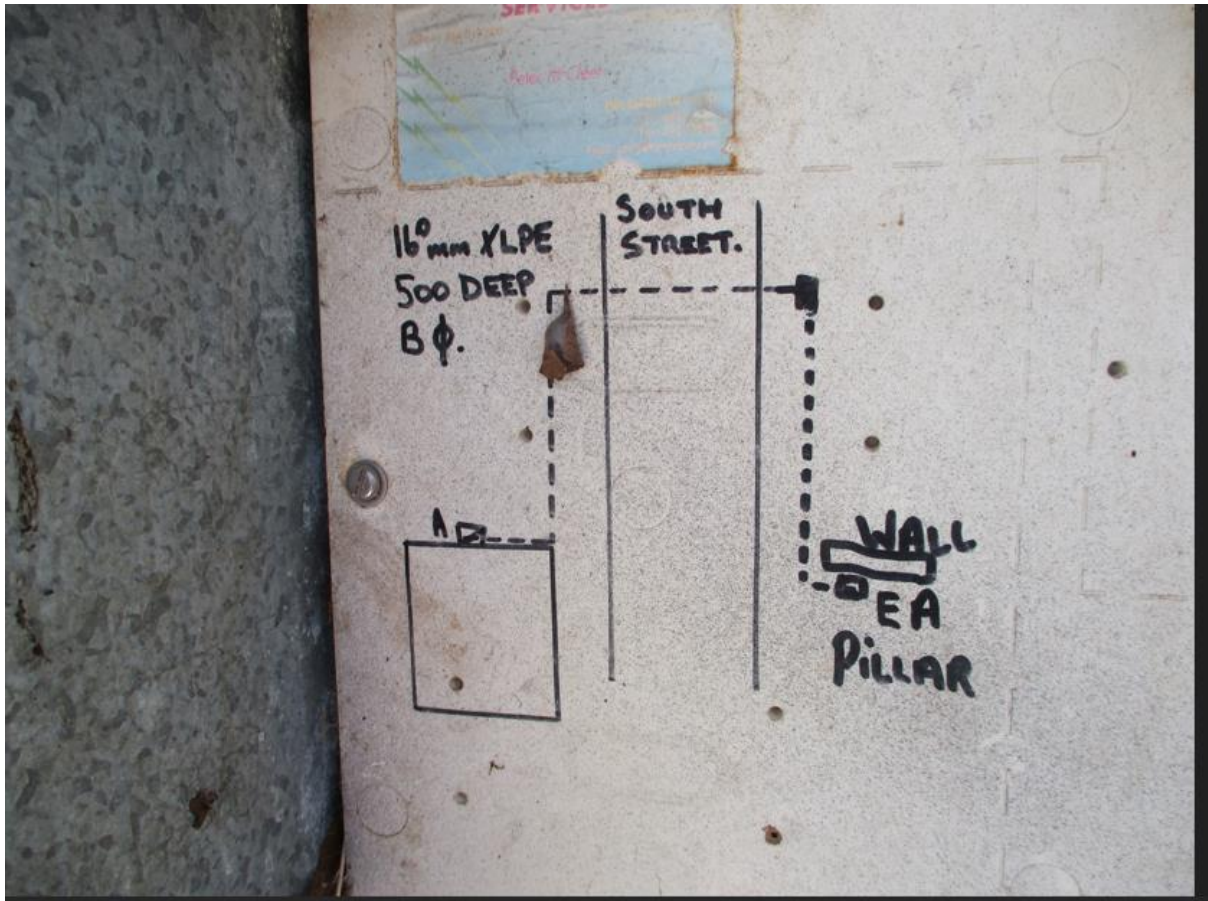














Mr Robert Billott – TAFT Law

On 12 July 2024, Dr Walton emailed United States environmental attorney Mr Robert Bilott. Mr Billott is internationally known and highly respected for lawsuits against DuPont on behalf of plaintiffs who were injured by chemical waste dumped in rural communities in West Virginia.

Mr Bilott has spent more than twenty years litigating hazardous dumping of PFAS and PFOA. These forever chemicals have been unregulated because industry had not publicly identified them as having known and significant hazardous effects. Notwithstanding, confirmation of hazardous effects from internal studies and more recently a growing body of peer reviewed research.

Dr Walton informed Mr Bilott that our home is just down the road from the RAAF Base Williamtown - <https://www.airforce.gov.au/about-us/bases/raaf-base-williamtown> The defence base houses most of the American made F-35A American Joint Strike Fighter Jets.

Dr Walton advised Mr Billott that historically PFAS and PFOA chemicals were long used at the RAAF Base Williamtown, which has allegedly contaminated the surrounding geographical area known as the red zone. The contamination reportedly also affects above and below ground water. The red zone allegedly carves out nearby residential areas, planned and current developments, recent school infrastructure, as well as agriculture, horticulture and mining interests. We have been reliably informed PFAS and PFOA exists outside the red zone and is continuing to move from the RAAF Base Williamtown. Likely accentuated by large scale rain events over many months and geological and topographical characteristics of the area. And in accordance with the latest Tier One peer reviewed science as to how forever chemicals disperse and accumulate.

Dr Walton also advised there is extensive media coverage about the contamination emanating from RAAF Base Williamtown and more broadly multiple Australian Defence sites across the country, where the long term use of PFAS and PFOA has reportedly contaminated surrounding land, homes, properties, agricultural and horticultural land, businesses and communities.

Some limited class actions have been waged in Australia, with law firms allegedly claiming around 30-40 per cent plus of the settlement amounts. Often resulting in the affected parties receiving limited to negligible compensation.

As yet, Dr Walton alleged that Australia's state and federal governments do not appear to recognise the adverse health consequences of PFAS and PFOA to residents, impact to drinking water or agriculture, horticulture and marine produce.

Dr Walton attached in his email some of the aforementioned photos that raised our concern that PFAS and PFOA may be at Pacific Dunes, having allegedly travelled through adjacent swamp/drinking water catchment areas. Dr Walton suggested in his email that this would not be surprising given Pacific Dune's proximity to the RAAF Base Williamtown. And it was surprising that Pacific Dunes was not included at the time the red zone was created/expanded.

Dr Walton also advised Mr Billott that it is reported Australian guidelines for chemicals in drinking water are up to 140 times higher than US Environmental Protection Authority (USEPA) - <https://theconversation.com/there-are-forever-chemicals-in-our-drinking-water-should-standards-change-to-protect-our-health-232143> compared to American legally enforceable water industry limits of four parts per trillion.

There are ongoing reports of residents that surround the RAAF Base Williamtown are presenting with health conditions and cancers that are allegedly atypical in the opinion of medical specialists. And for which the Australian government allegedly refuses (to date) to recognise, test or monitor.

Dr Walton enquired whether he and Mr Rooms could be legally represented in the US by TAFT Law, in a PFAS and PFOA action against the makers of the chemicals used at the RAAF Base Williamtown. We recognised that it was unlikely that such an action could also encompass the Australian Defence Department or local water authorities - although we allege they bear significant culpability.

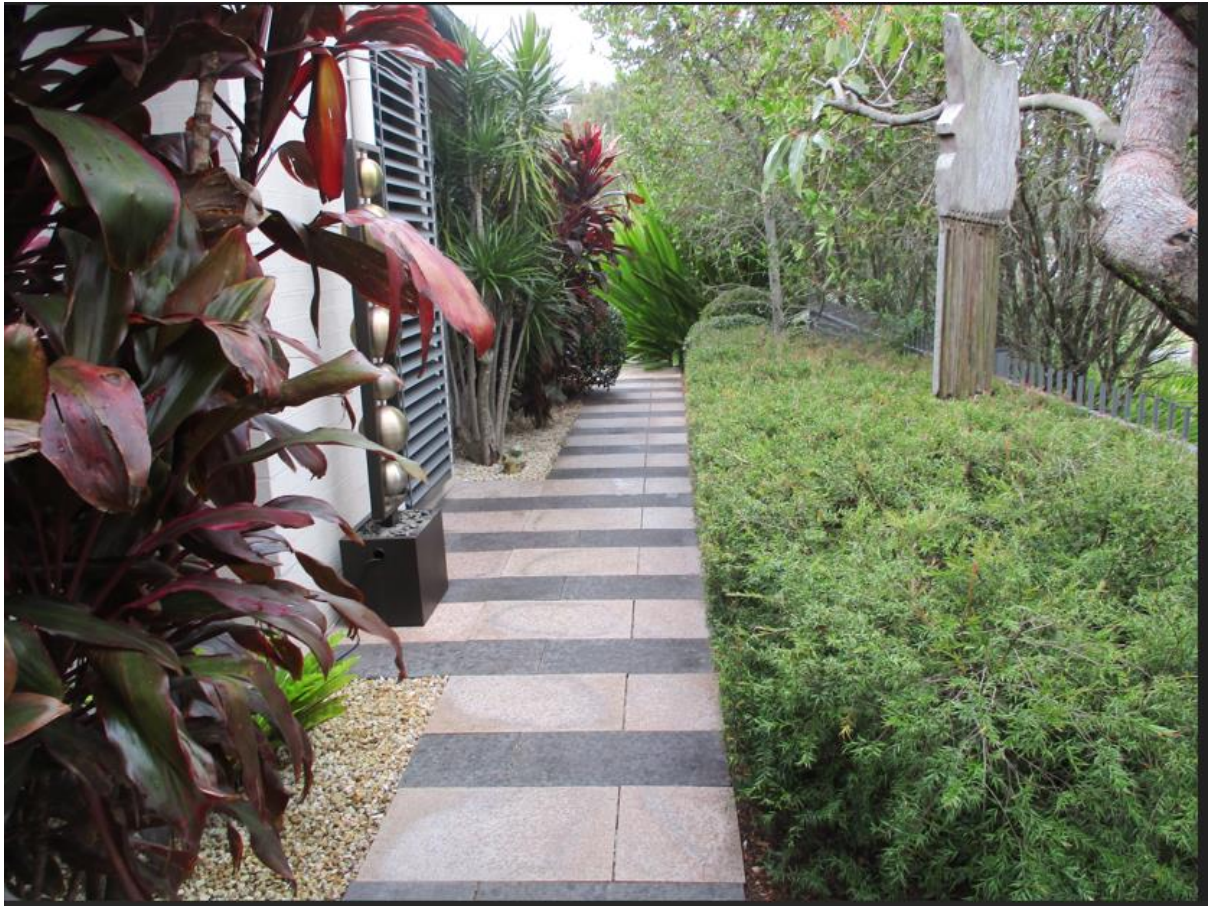
Dr Walton also advised Mr Billott that Mr Rooms provided important information that contributed to the success of the Williamtown Class Action against the Australian Department of Defence. Since providing such information, we allege that we have experienced bullying, harassment, intimidation and homophobia, that we also allege has come from vested interests, to keep from public and legal scrutiny the full extent of alleged PFAS and PFOA contamination and its various adverse impacts.

Mr Billott advised that he was 'so sorry to hear of the situation you are facing in Australia'. Unfortunately, neither Mr Billott nor his law firm were in a position to be able to represent or advise in connection with attempting to pursue claims related to such issues here in the US.

We intend to provide further details, including specific incidents, pattern of conduct and supporting photos, that has included at times disruption and threats to disrupt Dr Walton's clinical space/practice at Pacific Dunes. It is unsurprising that the RAAF Base Williamtown has not referred any serving personnel for clinical treatment, either at The Lambton Clinic or Pacific Dunes. Notwithstanding, Dr Walton's clinical expertise in treating/assessing complex and comorbid clinical mental health, including specialising in men's mental health. And also his proximity to the RAAF Base Williamtown.















At least 1,677 ADF service personnel died by suicide 1997-2021. Upwards of 3,000 preventable deaths. Find your therapeutic fit toward mental wellbeing



Tilligerry Peninsula

It is perhaps unsurprising that Coles Supermarket Tanilba Bay, which is located on the Tilligerry Peninsula, typically stocks multiple pallets of bottled water and significant self-space therein.

Tilligerry Sand Beds are reportedly the sole source of drinking water to thousands of residents who live in various communities on the Tilligerry Peninsula. And for which Hunter Water have had various explanations over the years as to the impact of PFAS and PFOA contained therein or otherwise.

See below for a further explanation.



Contamination Concerns/Questions

1. Is there a gag/suppression order or directive from Australian Defence or otherwise, regarding publicly reporting the extent of PFAS and PFOA contamination from the Australian RAAF Defence Base at Williamstown?
2. If so, when did the gag/suppression order or directive come into effect and who specifically directed its application?
3. Who does the gag/suppression order or directive apply to – departments, politicians, councils, media, etc.? And is this why PFAS and PFOA test results are allegedly being withheld from public scrutiny?
4. Does any gag/suppression order have a legal basis to lawfully restrict information about the impact of PFAS and PFOA, knowledge of which is in the public interest?
5. Who has received the PFAS and PFOA test results inside and outside the red zone – e.g., Hunter Water, Australian Defence, State Politicians, Federal Politicians, Local Councils, bureaucrats, business or private landholders?
6. Why does Hunter Water publicly report PFAS and PFOA levels across the whole of its water storages rather than transparently across each of the specific sites? For example, each bore/pumping station that is used for public drinking water.
7. Is Hunter Water covering up the true extent of PFAS and PFOA in residents' drinking water and the spread of contamination above and below ground? If so, has Hunter Water engaged in misleading, deceptive and corrupt conduct and for which did some individuals/organisations have inside knowledge from which they have financially profited and informed their business and real estate decisions?
8. Hunter Water have publicly disclosed they have turned off several pumps that draw water from the Tilligerry Sand Beds, to supply drinking water to thousands of Australians living on the Tilligerry Peninsula. Given the sand beds supply Tilligerry Peninsula its drinking water, what are the PFAS and PFOA levels in residents' drinking water past and present?

9. To what extent has the Australian Defence Department's long term use of the Australian Defence Salt Ash Air Weapons/Bombing range located near to the Tilligerry Sand Beds contributed to the PFAS and PFOA or other contamination of the Tilligerry Peninsula and sand beds that supplies Tilligerry residents their drinking water?
10. Have PFAS and PFOA levels been tested and monitored in and around the Australia Defence Salt Ash Air Weapons/Bombing Range? If not, why not?
11. When did authorities first become aware the Australian Defence Salt Ash Air Weapons/Bombing Range/Fire Fighting sites were a source of contamination and also potentially affected the Tilligerry Sand Beds and residents' drinking water?
12. What is the full extent of the spread of PFAS and PFOA inside and outside the Williamtown red zone, both above and below ground, since contamination first became known to authorities?
13. How many bores supply citizens, farmers and businesses their water for personal, commercial and private agriculture, horticulture, golf courses, parks, gardens, livestock, etc. in PFAS and PFOA affected areas? And in each case what is and has been the management, mitigation and testing regime of levels past, present and moving forward?
14. Why are producers allowed to use PFAS and PFOA contaminated bore water for the commercial production of food or livestock?
15. What is the extent of PFAS and PFOA contamination in nearby Medowie, Campvale and other surrounding communities? And who had knowledge of the contamination levels and when? Notwithstanding, substantial continuing development related to real estate – private and commercial, agriculture, horticulture, airport expansion and various business operations has occurred in these areas since the date of reported contamination at RAAF Base Williamtown.
16. Children are reportedly playing in PFAS and PFOA contaminated bodies of water, drains, ponds, swamps, etc. Therefore, it is in the public interest to provide an updated red zone map that fully informs everyone about the contamination levels – past, present and future. Particularly, given

forever chemicals are known build up/concentrate and travel geographically.

17. As part of a coordinated clean-up of affected areas, reports indicate that PFAS and PFOA contaminated soil was removed from the RAAF Base Williamtown by Newcastle EPA. It is also reported by Australian Defence that PFAS and PFOA contaminated soils were taken to approved EPA landfill sites. Where was this material taken and the total volume transported? How has the removed material been contained? What follow-up testing has occurred to monitor levels and ensure containment of the contamination and that no further disbursement is occurring into surrounding above and below ground water/soils and or environment?

18. Australian Defence Department alleges a PFAS and PFOA contamination clean-up spend of \$80 million, for which there reportedly was no significant reduction in recorded levels of forever chemicals. Who obtained these clean-up contracts at RAAF Base Williamtown? How was the money spent? How was the waste treated? Where did Newcastle EPA remove PFAS and PFOA contaminated soils? How was the contaminated waste stored? Has there been subsequent testing and/or monitoring of the disposal sites – surface run off and below ground? And what are the results of any such contamination testing?

Other Potential Contamination Concerns

An individual connected to the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary has recently alleged it is common knowledge that Koalas are dying while at the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary. There is speculation about the possible reasons for the marsupial deaths. However, at least some Koala deaths were allegedly inconsistent with the usual recognised causes. The sanctuary receives millions in public funding, gate attendances and stays accommodation. Therefore, having due regard to the allegations made and the continual decline of the Koala population in Port Stephens, it is in the public interest to know: -

1. Numbers of Koalas brought into care each month since inception.
2. Number of Koalas born in care each month since inception.
3. Number of Koalas who have died in care each month since inception.
4. Veterinarian reasons for the deaths of any Koalas who have died in care. And the results of all autopsies undertaken.
5. Number of Koalas who have been returned to the wild each month since inception and any steps to monitor their subsequent return to a natural habitat.
6. Is the reason for any Koala deaths while in care at the sanctuary, attributable to PFAS and PFOA contamination contained in gum leaves sourced locally and/or contamination of gum leaves sourced from land, potentially impacted from RAAF military aircraft/fighter jets allegedly dumping excess aviation fuel prior to their landing at RAAF Base Williamtown?
7. What is the Australian Defence policy and practice regarding the dumping of aviation fuel over land and/or sea prior to landing at RAAF Base Williamtown and how is this policy enforced?
8. Who owns land on which military planes/fighter jets are alleged to dump fuel prior to landing at RAAF Base Williamtown?
9. What are the effects of contamination on flora and fauna and marine environment?

10. Regarding any or all of the above questions, what is the extent of knowledge within Australian Defence, state, federal or local government, bureaucrats, politicians or media?

Since 1996, Hunter Water have variously and inconsistently reported to Mr Rooms: -

1. A water pipeline from Grahamstown Dam exists that can be used to supply safe drinking water to several thousand residents living in towns located on the Tilligerry Peninsula. (However, no known water pipeline is alleged to exist).
2. Hunter Water has turned off some of the water pumps that draw drinking water from the Tilligerry Sand Beds for residents living on the peninsula.
3. Hunter Water has turned off some of the water pumps that draw drinking water from the Tilligerry Sands Beds as a precaution of PFAS and PFOA contamination levels.
4. The Tilligerry Sands Beds are the sole source of publicly supplied drinking water for many local residents.
5. Most recently, Hunter Water has alleged to Mr Rooms that the Tilligerry Sand Beds are the sole source of publicly provided drinking water and none of the pumps have been turned off.
6. Evidentially, given PFAS and PFOA can allegedly seep through out the Tilligerry Sands Beds and notwithstanding the alleged lack of transparency from Hunter Water and Australian Defence, what is the PFAS and PFOA contamination levels across each of the individual pumps drawing/supplying drinking water to local Tilligerry residents since testing began at the site?
7. How can Hunter Water reliably know that public drinking water is safe if it is not reasonably conducting best practice testing of water supplies or bores supplying public drinking water or for various types of agriculture? And is the water testing accredited, transparent and fully independent?
8. It is unfair to overly attribute PFAS and PFOA contamination surrounding RAAF Base Williamtown, as over the years Fire and Rescue

NSW have allegedly used forever chemicals to extinguish vehicle fires on the road side.

9. Children allegedly die of many things, including from 'eating lollies'. Therefore, presumably the Hunter Water official's inference is that it is unfair to single out, attribute, investigate or hold accountable anyone or anybody for the potential and significant hazardous nature of PFAS and PFOA. Or hold Australian Defence, Hunter Water, anyone or anybody, to be reasonably responsible for the ongoing clean up, mitigation or legal liability.


Local Real Estate

We have become concerned that real estate buyers are potentially not being allegedly fully informed about potential PFAS and PFOA contamination for affected properties – residential, development, commercial, agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, etc.

On 16 August 2024 Dr Walton forwarded on his original email to MP Faehrmann, that detailed concerns about unusual foaming of water near to the Portmarnock real estate precinct/neighbourhood at Pacific Dunes. Specifically, the email was sent to the Australian Banking Association (ABA), Real Estate Institute of New South Wales (REINSW) and Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA).


Reply Reply All Forward













Fri 16/08/2024 6:11 AM

 Dr Michael Walton <>

FW: Re: PFAS & PFOA & RAAF Air Force Base Williamtown - Strictly Private & Confidential

To

 This message was sent with High importance.

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FYI

With thanks,

Dr Walton also raised his concerns separately with the major real estate businesses servicing the potentially impacted areas.

It is important all buyers and sellers are fully informed about PFAS and PFOA levels when transacting either properties or businesses. As well as all lending/financing institutions being fully informed, when they are considering or approving finance. Otherwise, there is a risk of misleading, deceptive and corrupt conduct.

Conclusion

Taken together, we allege this matter is an unmitigated and untenable mess for potentially and adversely impacted innocent local residents, families or businesses. And for which we allege that rigorous parliamentary and independent scrutiny is long overdue. In short, it is a catastrophic public disaster.

Should the Select Committee find any significant corrupt or illegal conduct by a public official or otherwise, then we suggest it is in the public interest the matter be forwarded to the appropriate state and/or federal body for investigation.

We respectfully commend our detailed written submission to the *Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales* for its investigation.

Please contact us should you require any further information or indicate how we may assist the Select Committee in its work, including attending in person and/or on site.

Mr Paul Rooms

Dr Michael Walton

<https://drmichaelwalton.com.au>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/counselling/michael-walton-lambton-nsw/1269050>

24 November 2024