

Submission
No 62

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

Name: Gary Blaschke OAM

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NSW PFAS INQUIRY
Chairperson Cate Faehrmann
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11-2-2025

Dear Committee,

My name is Gary Blaschke OAM, a resident of Lake Munmorah for over fifteen years, a community advocate and environmentalist.

I have been active in the environmental world for well over four decades, firstly as President of the South West Enviro Centre, the Chairperson of the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance and when moving to the Central Coast an inaugural member of the Coal Ash Community Alliance and now Future Sooner looking into the health issues of living near toxic industries such as coal-fired power stations and associated activities.

I have stood before Commissions of inquiry into the expansion of Port Botany with its groundwater plumes of ethylene dichloride and storage of some 15,000 tonnes of Hexachlorobenzene.

Other inquiries of which I have presented to on environmental impacts was Sydney's desalination plant and other railway terminals at Chullora culminating in working with the late wetlands expert Geoff Sainty on the compensatory Freshwater Creek Wetlands at the headwater of Cooks River.

I currently sit on the Eraring Community Consultative Committee and the newly formed NSW Coal Ash and Health Community Advisory Committee.

I had heard of this forever chemical and its destructive impacts from the Williamstown and Wreck Bay contaminations, yet the PFAS contamination alert came to me in 2017 by the Unit Head of the Stakeholder Engagement Team with the EPA Holly Love, when she called me to tell me they had found PFAS in Lake Munmorah.

Not getting upset, I asked what they were doing about it and she told me they were conducting fish studies of which I asked why not seagrass studies? The EPA believed this was a better way and yet over the following twelve months they were unable to catch any fish or prawns until I called their bluff by proposing to involve the NSW Environment Minister.

Within a few weeks they had caught six species of fish, had them tested and reported in a Fact Sheet (April 2018) that it was safe to continue to eat fish caught in the Tuggerah Lakes (not specifically naming Lake Munmorah or Budgewoi Lake). During the following year several Fact Sheets and News Releases were telling the community that there was no need for concern.

Standing before the Legislative Council Public Works Committee inquiry into Costs for remediation of sites containing coal ash repositories (Report 4 March 2021) we find sixteen recommendations with Rec. 6 requiring that ***“NSW Health to immediately undertake an epidemiological assessment of the health of residents near coal ash dams to establish the health impacts of coal ash and publish by 31 December 2022”***.

Recommendation No. 7 called for ***“a comprehensive and independent assessment of the environmental impacts of coal ash dams to provide a better understanding of the issues and to inform best practice remediation”***.

Neither of these recommendations has been completed over the past five years and yet if so may have uncovered the PFAS issue earlier. As fore all power stations throughout Australia we would not have coal ash or PFAS contaminations.

Being aware of the EPA’s Variation of Clean-Up Notice in 2021 (Notice Number 1604734) to Sunset Power International Pty Ltd trading as Delta Electricity it was found that 61,770 cubic metres of illegally dumped asbestos and 159,200 cubic metres of an unspecified general solid waste had been dumped in the unlined Vales Point ash dam which was suspected to have been leaching into the lakes system and neighbouring lands.

I as a resident and now Spokesperson for Future Sooner had raised our concerns with most of the Federal and State political representatives on the Central Coast which fell on deaf ears.

Future Sooner had four face to face meeting with the Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units, the EPA and other NSW government departments including NSW Health and NSW Planning, again to no avail or response.

Our actions and stories in local tabloids had caught the eye of the United Nations who subsequently sent their Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human rights Marcos Orellana and Halida Nasic the UN Officer on Human rights to meet with residents of the region near the coal-fired power stations and their ash dams. Their damning findings have been tabled at the United Nations Assembly.

These actions had the C.E.O. of the EPA Tony Chapel also wanting to meet with the community of which he promised to keep close contact with Future Sooner and yet we have not heard from him since December 2023, even though the land of the former Lake Munmorah power station has recently been classified as ***“Significantly Contaminated”*** with PFAS and Hydrocarbons by the EPA.

Dr. Kat Taylor Director Central Coast Public Health Unit emailed me on 26-9-2022 also telling me that ***“we will continue to consult and provide regular updates to you on the work as it progresses”***, she also wrote ***“ I can also advise a formal response will be with you shortly , in relation to your health enquiry of 12 July 2022 made through Ms Liesl Tesch MP”***.

We have not heard from her to date some two and a half years later.

Other correspondence from the Hon Ryan Park MP Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health, states that ***“NSW Health acknowledges that air pollution, including from coal fired power stations, is associated with an increase in hospital admissions and deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory disease”***, yet fails to include the finding of PFAS on Significantly Contaminated lands of all power stations.

The community, NSW Health, NSW E.P.A. and consecutive governments have known of the PFAS issues for decades and have chosen to sweep it under the carpet and hope that nobody finds out about it.

The Chairperson the 2021 Coal Ash Inquiry was the Hon Daniel Mookhey MP, who’s Committee Comment (3.66) states, ***“We are disappointed with the response by the NSW EPA and NSW Health to community concerns about a potential link between the circulation of additional metals in the air and waterways, and impacts on health outcomes for the community. This response, in conjunction with the lack of research conducted to date on this matter, demonstrates a complete disregard by the government towards the health of its citizens”***.

The extent of the Lake Munmorah and Colongra Bay PFAS and hydrocarbon contamination became even more alarming when General Property Maintenance (GPM) applied for a Development Application to construct a water treatment plant with Central Coast Council. On further investigation it turned out to be a PFAS treatment plant which would need to operate for a **further ten years** to remediate the site.

The amount of PFAS and other chemicals escaping from the decommissioned Lake Munmorah power station and leaching into lakes and bays over the past decade or more, is completely unknown. Considering the time it takes the Munmorah Lake to circulate its waters is 520 days, therefore whatever goes into the lake would generally accumulate in the deepest part of the lake which is no greater than two metres in depth.



Proposed and approved new housing estates at the Doyalson RSL site will consist of 360 retirement villas, a community centre, golf clubhouse and driving range, medical centre, childcare centre, service stations, food outlets, motel/hotel accommodation, recreational facilities, a go-kart track and paintball, ***all sandwiched between the 30 million tonnes of stored contaminated coal ash at the Vales Point ash dam across the road and the now "Significantly Contaminated" lands of the former Lake Munmorah power station site on the other side.***

No mention of the PFAS and hydrocarbon contamination of which the EPA's own **Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 (CLM Act)** states...

- The substances have already caused harm
- The substances are toxic, persistent or bioaccumulative or are present in large quantities or high concentrations or occur in combinations
- Exposure pathways are available to the substances
- The uses to which the land and LANDS ADJOINING it are currently being put are likely to increase the risk of harm
- The approved uses of the land and land adjoining it are such as to increase the risk of harm from the substances
- The substances have migrated or are likely to migrate from the land.



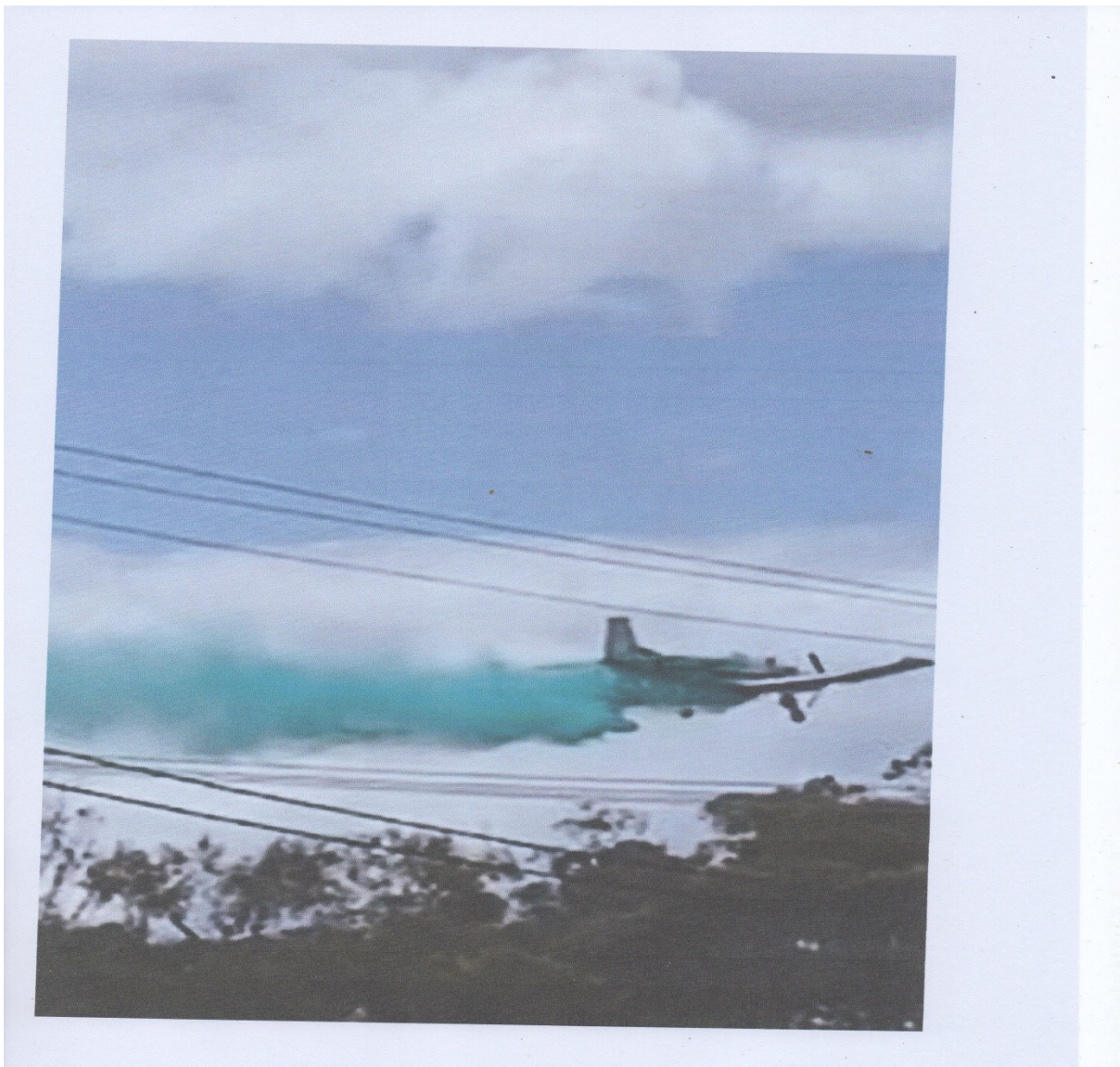
Moonscape opposite approved housing estate at Doyalson...

Cancers and respiratory conditions are rampant in all local communities with figures from the Australian Cancer Atlas and Bureau of Statistics having the small township of Budgewoi being 102% above the Australian average for Head and Neck cancer.

Nearby suburbs have Mesothelioma (asbestos) related cancer reaching 83% above the Australian average of population, Thyroid @ 41% and Asthma @ 17.5% AAA.

We now have the establishment of a PFAS Community Consultative Committee convened by General Property Maintenance which has only met once to date, yet the wider community do not know who sits on this committee or why?

We also have the newly established NSW Coal Ash and Health Community Advisory Committee, yet to meet although both are simple a cover-up and box ticking exercise to show the Government's commitment to the community, yet are also simply just another inquiry into a previous government inquiry.



Dust suppressant being dropped over coal ash dam only 100 metres from Doyalson RSL and its approved housing estates.



Opposite the approved housing estates:

Gary Blaschke OAM

Gary Blaschke

Community Advocate