



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron

**Minutes of
Meeting**

BP6651548

**MINUTES OF THE 43rd MEETING OF THE AMBERLEY CONSULTATIVE
WORKING GROUP (ACWG),
HELD AT RAAF BASE AMBERLEY, 23 SQUADRON ON 26 NOV 19**

Attendees:

WGCDR M Thompson	RAAF AMB ABXO	Chairperson
Mr M Davies	RAAF AMB BM	
SQNLDR D Nott	Community Engagement Officer	
Ms L Wapler	PFAS Investigation and Management Branch	
Ms V Glyde	PFAS Investigation and Management Branch	
Ms Susan Kizito	PFAS Investigation and Management Branch	
Mr Mark O'Connell	PFAS Investigation and Management Branch	
Mr G Hatchman	President Willowbank Area Group	
Mr I Dainer	Vice President Willowbank Area Group	
Mr E Dawson	Dawson's Technical Services	
Mr David Serfontein	TAE	
Mr Ben McGruer	TAE	
Mr B Behm	Local Resident	
Mr D Pahlke	Local Resident	
Mr P Conroy	Local Resident	
Mrs R Conroy	Local Resident	
CPL R Smith	23SQN ABCP	Secretary

Apologies:

The Hon S Neumann MP	Federal Member for Blair
Mr J Krause MP	Member for Scenic Rim
Mr G McLay	West Moreton Anglican College
Mrs G Ashton	Local Resident
Mr M Goddard	Local Resident
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman's Office	

ITEM 1: OPENING

1. WGCDR Thompson opened the meeting at 1715 h.

ITEM 2: REVIEW OF COMMITTEE ATTENDEES AND APOLOGIES

2. WGCDR Thompson carried out a review of apologies received as detailed in the meeting agenda. Mr David Serfontein and Mr Ben McGruer were in attendance to give a brief on the upgrade of the engine test cell.

ITEM 3: REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

3. Attendees acknowledged that they had received and read the previous meeting's minutes dated 27 Aug 19. PFAS branch provided responses to paragraph 7 action item from the previous minutes and was distributed to all attendees. All were in favour of accepting the previous minutes.

ITEM 4: ENGINE TEST CELL REDEVELOPMENT NOISE PRESENTATION

4. Mr McGruer advised the group of the works being undertaken at Engine Test Cell Number 1, located at the southern end of the main runway. Mr McGruer also gave a brief history on the test cell and the need for its upgrade.
5. Mr McGruer advised that the works are scheduled for completion by the end of December with a complete replacement of all acoustic equipment, upgraded and extended the baffles to reduce noise as much as possible. TAE will then be fitting the building with specialist control systems and other internal equipment. Commissioning of the building will begin in March and continue until July.
6. WGCDR Thompson enquired as to the hours of operation and Mr McGruer advised the hours were being negotiated, but would most likely be a standard 6:00am to 6:00pm timeframe.
7. Mr Pahlke enquired as to who the negotiations were with, and what guidelines were being used, and if the EPA were involved. Mr McGruer advised that the negotiations were with the Commonwealth as the building is Defence owned and TAE were contracted to perform engine testing on their behalf.
8. Mr Pahlke reiterated that the test cell should be quieter or no worse than before, but wanted to know how far away people would hear the test cell while operating at its highest level. Mr McGruer advised that the predicted noise would be at conversation level outside the base and into the community. Mr Pahlke enquired as to specific noise levels for the Willowbank community specifically and Mr McGruer advised he would need to get specific noise modelling for any particular area.
9. Mr Behm expressed that the issue he had was not with noise you can hear, but with reverberation through the ground that travels through the bedrock. Mr Serfontein advised that a correlation study was conducted in relation to reports submitted by Mr Behm and the outcome was that the engine test cell wasn't in operation during the times Mr Behm reported.
10. Mr Conroy advised that the mining industry use specific guidelines for ground vibration and questioned if TAE would be using similar guidelines. Mr McGruer responded that ground vibration isn't a criteria that they currently assess.
11. Mr Pahlke requested a map or some information as to where members of the community would be likely to feel the ground vibration from the test cell. Mr Serfontein advised that no ground vibration testing had been done as TAE only test for acoustic noise.
12. Mr Serfontein and Mr McGruer advised they are willing to work with Mr Behm and 23SQN by correlating any vibration felt by Mr Behm with any engine testing TAE are conducting.
13. Mr Pahlke had requested that the Minutes reflect the points already raised and answered regarding ground vibration, and that the group require feedback on further monitoring and oversight once the facility is operational to alleviate any community concerns. WGCDR Thompson mentioned that the facility meets all requirements for noise IAW Aircraft Noise Ombudsman guidelines.

14. Mr Serfontein confirmed that TAE have done as much as practical regarding the reduction of acoustic noise and are willing to work with the community regarding any ground vibration.

For Action: TAE is to develop a plan of advising 23SQN when engine testing will be conducted to minimise impact on affected community groups.

ITEM 5: PFAS INVESTIGATION PROJECT UPDATE

15. Ms Glyde introduced to the group Ms Kizito as incoming Defence Project Director, replacing Mr Le Riche, and Mr O'Connell as Defence PFASIM Director of Investigations and Community Support.

16. PFASIM Branch held a Community Information Session and Base Briefing on 29 August 2019 regarding the Amberley PFAS investigation Human Health Risk Assessment. The event was held to publicly release the report and to answer community questions. Both events went well with the full technical project team in attendance and a Defence spokesperson giving a presentation also.

17. Ms Glyde informed the group that the Amberley Investigation team were currently working on the Ecological Risk Assessment and that document has just been reviewed by the Queensland Government PFAS technical working group and once finalised, the document should be released early next year.

18. The team were also working on the PFAS Management Area Plan. This document is based on confirmed findings from the Human Health Risk Assessment and the Ecological Risk Assessment which identify the risks that PFASIM branch need to manage. Management plans will target the source and pathways of PFAS and aim to mitigate or reduce those pathways of migration of PFAS off the base.

19. Ms Glyde informed the group that the PFAS field team were undertaking their seasonal monitoring event for post dry season monitoring. This monitoring will later transition to the Ongoing Monitoring Plan which is a roughly six monthly monitoring program that is used to identify any trends to assess if PFAS is migrating or stabilising. The results of the Seasonal Monitoring Event sampling will be published early next year.

20. Ms Wapler informed the group that the investigation area had expanded slightly to include a small part of Leichhardt. The reason for the expansion was due to the detailed site investigation finding that the housing estate developed on the old golf course was historically irrigated by water from the Bremer River. PFASIM Branch identified the need to establish if PFAS is present and if there is, investigate the potential for exposure as a result.

21. Ms Wapler informed the group that the Investigation team were preparing to start sampling at a small number of properties in this expanded area. The Investigation has established what the land usage is and confirmed that the properties are on mains water. Due to the high number of rental properties within that area, very few are growing vegetables, but the ones that are, will be part of the sampling group. The results will be part of the Human Health Risk Assessment once compiled and published.

22. Mr Conroy reminded PFASIM branch of the need to have his water tank drained, cleaned and refilled as the mains water pipe near his property has burst four times since the last ACWG, leaving the property without water for extended periods of time forcing Mr and Mrs Conroy to use the tank water. Urban utilities have provided some bottled drinking water, but if the tank water was remediated, the loss of mains water would have a reduced impact.

Mr O'Connell confirmed to Mr Conroy the water tank would be drained and refilled by the Investigation team, as previously communicated.

23. Mr Conroy was advised from Urban Utilities that the mains water pipe near his property would be handed over to the RAAF to manage once all repairs had been completed. Mr Davies was unaware of this.

24. Mr Hatchman has received enquiries from Willowbank residents and people looking to buy in the area, asking about PFAS contamination in the Willowbank area. Mr Hatchman has asked if there was any scope for soil testing in the area to alleviate any concerns and to dispel rumours. Ms Wapler confirmed that Willowbank was not part of the Investigation Area.

25. Mr Pahlke probed for answers as to why Willowbank hasn't had soil testing conducted. Ms Glyde reaffirmed that Willowbank wasn't part of the investigation area due to its location from the base, surface and ground water movement and direction, and analysis of the base and water source areas.

26. Mr O'Connell added that in areas such as Williamstown, to support house sales, PFASIM branch have paid for soil testing on properties in the affected areas.

27. Mr Pahlke reminded the group on comments made in previous ACWG meetings regarding free blood and soil testing for residents living next to the watercourse and probed PFASIM branch as to an answer if residents were able to get free testing. Mr O'Connell explained that it was a Department of Health decision that has been reviewed a number of times and is a whole of Government issue. The Department of Health's position remains the same, which is, testing will only be conducted at Williamstown, Oakey and Tindal.

28. Mr Pahlke enquired as to who was the team leader of the PAFSIM team, Mr O'Connell confirmed that he was. Mr Pahlke made a claim that PFAS was found eighty kilometers upstream of the Bremer River, but didn't provide a source for this claim. Mr O'Connell suggested this could be possible as PFAS can be found everywhere and has been in use for quite a while. Mr Dainer made a suggestion that it had been reported that traces had been found fourteen kilometers upstream of the Bremer River which would put it on the other side of the Willowbank residential area.

29. Mr Pahlke has requested maps and core contamination areas in relation to the PFAS investigation. WGCDR Thompson advised that particular information was given during the community engagement meetings. PFASIM Branch confirmed this information is available on the PFAS Investigation website <https://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Amberley/>

For Action: PFASIM will bring maps used during community engagement to the next ACWG meeting.

30. Mr Dainer enquired about the instruction [stated in recent media reports] for residents in the affected areas to not eat any home-grown vegetables and recalled that The Hon Shayne Neumann was quoted as saying this in the media. All members from PFASIM advised there has never been any instruction of that nature given to residents by Defence. Mrs Conroy mentioned that during a visit to her property by an Investigation team fieldwork staff member for sampling early on in the investigation, she was told to not eat any home-grown vegetables. Ms Wapler restated there has never been any instruction of this nature given to residents by Defence. Mr O'Connell confirmed that in the last Human Health Risk Assessment, information and research over the last few years confirms that the risk from eating home-grown vegetables was low.

31. Mr Dainer requested confirmation from PFASIM branch, and after acknowledgement that factual research had been conducted and deemed the risk to be low, that PFASIM branch have not released any authoritative advice to the residents that they shouldn't have a backyard vegetable patch. PFASIM branch members confirmed this fact.

32. Mrs Conroy raised concerns that contaminated floodwater from Warrill Creek moves across her front yard and moves onto base, conversely any contaminated run off from the base will cross towards the creek and local community. Ms Glyde confirmed that flood modelling and sediment sampling formed part of the investigation process and this has been addressed in the Detailed Site Investigation report and the Human Health Risk Assessment report.

33. Mrs Conroy enquired as to why the safe PFAS levels in Australia were different to Europe and the United States. Mr O'Connell acknowledged that Australia was slightly higher than parts of Europe and the United States, however Food Standards Australia and New Zealand set the safe guidelines in conjunction with an expert panel.

34. Mr Pahlke again expressed that the community would like free blood testing and requested a member from the Department of Health be present at the next ACWG to answer more specific questions as he had a copy of a newspaper article that told residents to not eat meat from locally grazing cattle and not to eat locally grown vegetables. Ms Glyde stated that PFASIM Branch have responded to many media requests for information and have supplied many detailed documents, however due to limited space and response time in media reports, some of the information has not been delivered accurately.

35. Ms Wapler stated that during the community consultation meetings members from the Department of Health and West Moreton Public Health are available to answer any questions and provide advice to any concerned citizens.

For Action: PFASIM branch to add details of the West Moreton Public Health into the minutes. Actioned as follows:

West Moreton Public Health Unit (WMPHU)

Ph: 07 3818 4700

EH_WestMoreton@health.qld.gov.au

Please note there is an underscore after EH.

36. Mr Pahlke enquired if any members of the public from either the core contamination zone or further out, have had any blood testing. Mr O'Connell confirmed that the Commonwealth have not funded blood testing outside the Williamstown, Oakey and Tindal areas, but went on to detail that blood testing will only give a number result of PFAS levels in the blood. No other health information is derived from the testing.

37. Mr Dainer enquired if the PFASIM branch investigations would cover the soil removed from the base and used by a commercial company 'Nu Grow'. Mr Dainer acknowledges the soil was removed before the discovery of PFAS, however wanted to know what was being done with the contaminated product now. Ms Glyde advised that PFASIM branch was aware of the incident, and explained that the initial handling and management of the soil was part of the base redevelopment. As soon as the Queensland Government advised that NuGrow's licence to receive PFAS contaminated soil was to be removed, and the base ceased sending soil there and have taken steps to ensure this type of incident doesn't happen in the future and soil was handled within current environmental guidelines.

ITEM 6: BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

38. Mr Davies advised that a consultation meeting will take place on Friday 29 November with all parties that registered an expression of interest for grazing of cattle. The meeting will be an overview of the licencing agreement and the requirements to comply, a site inspection will also be included. A ballot will then be conducted from the twenty two registered parties. Critical issues that need to be adhered to are fencing and water, as the current fencing is for boundary identification and needs to be sufficient to hold in cattle. These are national conditions that apply to the licencing agreement. Mr Davies added that the old tick research facility is scheduled for demolition which includes the buildings and internal fencing with the demolition works expected to start in March 2020.

39. Mrs Conroy raised concerns about people trespassing on Defence land adjacent to her property. The issue is the lack of signage that advises of the Defence boundary and suggested signs be put up to advise where the Defence boundary was.

For Action: Mr Davies to investigate additional signs indicating the Defence boundary next to Mr and Mrs Conroy's property.

40. Mr Conroy enquired as to where the business item referring to his property being a buffer zone came from. No other members of the group could recall and Mr Conroy didn't have any issue so no further action is required on this issue.

41. Mr Behm had previously made enquiries regarding notifications from contractors informing residents of burn offs. Mr Davies was recently in a meeting with the contractors regarding the notification of the burn offs to the residents and reiterated that they inform the residents and put a notification into the 'Queensland Times' newspaper. Mr Davies also confirmed that the burn program was now managed locally.

42. SQNLDR Nott suggested that the contractors get a signature from the residents to acknowledge that they have been informed of any future burn offs and closes the loop to ensure everyone is aware of the burn program. All members of the group were satisfied with this suggestion.

43. Mrs Conroy requested notification of any blank firing activity at the APOD to ensure residents are aware and can inform authorities if something other than Defence activities happens in that area.

For Action: 23SQN to implement plan to alert residents of any blank firing activities

44. WGCDR Thompson addressed Mr Behm's concern over the re-use of gravel removed from under the runway and used on the back road. The Regional Environmental and Sustainment Officer confirmed with Oricon that no testing had been done on the gravel after removal, however that particular gravel was brand new and only on the ground for 18 months prior to being dug up and reutilised.

45. Mr Pahlke suggested to the residents near the new proposed roadworks that they get in contact with council to inform them of concerns of possible PFAS contaminated gravel and to get a reference number from the council after lodging their concerns.

ITEM 7: AMBERLEY BASE UPDATE

46. WGCDR Thompson advised that there are no plans for additional base activities for the rest of the year, and no additional aircraft besides the usual transits and home based Squadrons. There will be a noticeable drop off from mid-December to the first week of January.

ITEM 8: NOISE COMPLAINTS

47. WGCDR Thompson stated that between the dates 22 August to 20 November 2019 there have been 28 noise complaints. Of the noise complaints, 10 were F/A-18s, 5 were C-17As and 13 unknown aircraft. The locations of the complaints range from the Sunshine Coast to the New South Wales border, to the Darling Downs region.

ITEM 9: AGENDA ITEMS

48. Mr Behm requested PFASIM branch be notified of potential contamination of the lake adjacent to the old Swanbank power station due to water being taken from the Bremer River at times of drought to be used at the power station. Mr Pahlke requested feedback from PFASIM Branch regarding this issue.

For Action: PFASIM Branch to provide feedback at the next ACWG meeting regarding the potential for PFAS to be present in the lake at the old Swanbank Power Station site.

49. Mr Behm was satisfied that his concerns with the Behms Road upgrade were addressed previously during the meeting.

50. Mr Behm raised a concern with the kangaroos locked within the golf links area at the back of the base. Mr Davies advised that he was meeting with members from Landcare to address another issue with kangaroos and will bring this up also.

ITEM 10: COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE'S FEEDBACK

51. Mr Hatchman gave an update to his proposal to have a plaque erected in honour of Mr and Mrs Collett referencing their involvement as the people that established the area Amberley was named after. The original proposal was to unveil the plaque on ANZAC Day 2021, however this may be pushed forward to 7 Jun 2020 as this will be the 80th anniversary of the establishment of RAAF Base Amberley. Location is yet to be decided on, however there is a site marker near the old Amberley school on base and another plaque could be put up near Mr and Mrs Collett's gravesite.

For Action: WGCDR Thompson to forward any proposal generated by Mr Hatchman regarding the siting and erecting of the memorial plaque.

52. Mr Hatchman enquired as to the possibility of having a larger sign advertising the location of RAAF Amberley on the corner of the Cunningham Highway turnoff heading towards the base. SQNLDR Nott advised that from a PR and security point of view, advertising the location of Defence establishments is not a common practice anymore.

53. Mr Hatchman advised of the upgrade for the Cunningham Highway from the Yamanto interchange to the turnoff for RAAF Amberley. The funding was to be a 50/50 split between State and Federal Governments, however the Queensland Government wasn't prepared to pay the 50%. The Federal Government money has now been reallocated to include a larger stretch of the Cunningham Highway and less emphasis on the Amberley turnoff.

For Action: Mr Pahlke has requested the Minutes from meetings 39, 40 and 41 be emailed to him.

54. Mr Pahlke advised the group of his email address so if they were interested in receiving any correspondence relating to any local issues from Mr Pahlke, he would be able to send these articles through. Mr Pahlke's email address is: dpahlke1953@gmail.com

55. Mr Pahlke requested a base access pass. WGCDR Thompson denied this request as the security for the base is increasing.

56. Mr Dawson requested a letter of condolence be sent to Mrs Hooper on behalf of the ACWG for the passing of Mr Hooper.

ITEM 10: OTHER BUSINESS

57. SQNLDR Nott referenced members of the group to an article in the Air Force News regarding work Air Force has been doing with the local indigenous community, a hard copy of the article was distributed to the members present.

58. Mr Davies wished all the members of the group a Merry Christmas and thanked everyone for their input and attendance throughout the year.

ITEM 11: NEXT MEETING

59. The next ACWG meeting will be held on the 10 March 2020.

60. The meeting was officially closed at 1910h.

M Thompson
WGCDR
Chairperson

Feb 20

M Davies
Mr
Base Manager

Feb 20