



Media Release

Coalition Against PFAS response to release of Federal Parliamentary Inquiry Report

Statement from CAP President Lindsay Clout

“The findings of today’s federal parliamentary inquiry report vindicate contaminated communities in finding that both the Defence Department and Government not only lost control of managing PFAS contamination in Australia but in truth, never had any.

We welcome the recommendations regarding long-overdue compensation. Our homes and businesses have been contaminated by chemicals, our health put at serious risk, the mental and financial toll has been immense.

Just as importantly the inquiry committee has heard the message loud and clear from contaminated communities regarding the need for a nationwide response. We fully endorse and welcome its call for an independent, well-resourced, ‘PFAS Tsar’ or Coordinator-General, to take charge of cleaning-up what will prove to be one of the largest ever chemical contaminations in our nation’s history.

In an era of political party and Canberra self-obsession, the opening statement in the report from inquiry head Andrew Laming MP that: *“It should not take years of campaigning at this level of effort to adequately address the legitimate concerns of communities of people.”* must be heeded by all our elected representatives.

No more delays, no more excuses, and no more ignoring people whose lives have been utterly destroyed simply because of where they live.”

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About the Coalition Against PFAS (CAP)

CAP is made up on representatives from communities around Australia with the foundation members being from Williamstown, Oakey, Katherine and Gippsland.

They are farmers, doctors, business owners and families who have been unwittingly caught up in one of Australia’s largest contamination crises and have come together to highlight what is a national issue.

Their communities were among the first in Australia to learn that PFAS associated chemicals used in firefighting foam have leached into their community. These toxic plumes spread via waterways, with the bio-persistent nature of PFOS related chemicals meaning it can take over 70 years for them to break down.



International studies have highlighted increased risks of cancer and other major diseases from exposure. In Australia impacted communities have received conflicting levels of advice but some are warned not to drink water or eat food of their land due to health risks.

Others have been left in the dark.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians in a formal submission to the Government stated the current advice in relation to PFAS is: *“likely to be confusing for the public.”* and that *“we advocate for a change to the national health advice that incorporates the latest international evidence for adverse human health effects.”*

“To date, the Australian Government is a world leader in managing PFAS contamination.”

Letter from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to Williamstown residents. March 2018

Fact – More than 170 countries have signed a treaty which ban PFAS related chemicals – Australia refuses to.

Fact – PFAS is not only still leaking off Defence bases, airports and industrial sites all around Australia in States such as Queensland it’s still in use at over 200 sites.

Fact – Defence and the Government continues to refuse to provide blood testing for residents at a number of contaminated sites. It will not release collated blood testing results from other sites.

Fact: - Contaminated communities are told not to drink water or eat food from their properties but the Government is dismissive of the international research detailing the health risks of PFAS.

Fact – The Inquiry hearings saw both the Defence Department admit they would welcome a third party stepping in to better manage the PFAS contamination and the Federal Government unable to point to who was coordinating the national response to it handling it.