



**April 18th**

## **Defence's PFAS compensation claims don't add up**

The Department of Defence has continued its, “deny, deflect and distract” strategy in regards to PFAS contamination, this time refusing to give a straight answer on potential compensation for those in affected areas.

The Department of Defence's Steve Grzeskowiak this month told a Senate estimates hearing “no amount” of money had been set aside to compensate communities whose land, homes and businesses have been polluted by toxic firefighting foams leaking off Defence sites.

Pushed about contingencies for one of the largest ever class actions taken against the Federal Government by residents in Williamstown, Oakey and Katherine, Mr Grzeskowiak claimed it was an, “unquantifiable contingent liability.”

“I'm not aware of a figure that may have been allocated,” he told the Senate committee.

Given the class action is about to be heard in the Federal Court of Australia in August, it almost defies belief that the Department of Defence would not be able to provide a figure set aside for compensation let alone claim that they haven't budgeted for any whatsoever.

After much delay, Defence has spent the past few months filing their evidence in the class actions to quantify the very thing that Mr Grzeskowiak now says is “unquantifiable”.

All that the public has learnt in the last three months is that Defence has:

- budgeted up to \$50 million in legal fees to drag this matter all the way through a long and expensive trial.
- is paying an average \$120,000 salary per person for over 40 consultants to look at a problem they denied even existed five years ago but stares residents in the face daily.
- is facing over 1000 separate claimants in the class actions but has only managed to settle one claim in four years outside of those class actions by using a separate confidential “scheme” administered by the, “the whole of government through the Attorney-General's Department” . .



For four years Defence has paid little more than lip-service to polluted communities. Now it's choosing to do so to the rest of Australia refusing to give a clear answer on when those communities affected will receive compensation for the mess that Defence has caused.

**For further information contact: Lindsay Clout, CAP President – 0437 300 377**

### **About the Coalition Against PFAS (CAP)**

CAP is made up on representatives from communities around Australia.

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."*

