



Media Release

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Budget ignores contaminated communities

A lack of any new funding for communities contaminated by toxic chemicals leaking off Defence bases shows the Government isn't serious about addressing the issue.

"The only new money the Government is budgeting to address PFAS contamination caused by firefighting foams at over 90 sites across Australia, is for lawyers to defend claims against it," said Coalition Against PFAS (CAP) President Lindsay Clout.

"Yet at the same time the Defence Department is publicly peddling the line that home owners and business whose land and water supply has been heavily polluted don't need to take legal action to get compensation.

The truth is that Defence has launched a four-year war of legal attrition against its own communities and continues to drag out and delay any negotiated settlement or legal process.

At their current rate of "negotiated" settlement all the claims against the Defence Department would be resolved a sometime in the next 200 years," said Mr Clout.

No new money was directed in the Budget towards cleaning up highly toxic soils and waterways which have seen health authorities warn local communities against the consumption of food or water.

"The paltry \$4.7 million that was previously announced towards research into cleaning-up PFAS contamination is not funded into the future while the Government will continue to spend millions more on legal strategies aimed at denying communities fair compensation," said Mr Clout.

Ends

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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."*