



To Andrew Laming
CC: Inquiry Committee members

By email:

Tuesday July 30th 2019

Outcome of the Inquiry into the management of PFAS contamination in and around Defence bases.

Dear Andrew,

It is now over 230 days since the Inquiry you chaired released its report calling for immediate action for communities devastated by PFAS contamination leaking off Defence Department bases.

In the introduction to that report you wrote that: *"It should not take years of campaigning at this level of effort to adequately address the legitimate concerns of communities of people."*

Yet here we are once again, asking why our Parliament, why our elected officials continue to ignore our plight.

It is over a year since you started your Inquiry hearings and eight months since your report was released. Yet we have not even had a cursory response from the Federal Government to your report recommendations.

You told Parliament upon the release of the report in December 2018, that in regards to our situation: *"No family should be trapped on contaminated land. Justice delayed is justice denied."*

Delay and denial though is all we continue to see.

This has caused an increasing sense of hopelessness from many within our communities after years of fighting to be heard and battling an often uncaring and immovable bureaucracy.

What is most chilling, is that this inaction appears to be more by design than disinterest.



The only significant developments since you released your report are:

- 1) The voluntary PFAS blood testing program for communities coming to an end.
- 2) The Defence Department confirming to a Senate hearing that more than \$50 million was being set aside in potential legal fees to fight any community claims.
- 3) Residents who are trapped in PFAS contaminated communities now being advised by Federal health authorities that they, “avoid exposure” to a banned chemical Defence admits is still leaking off their bases and into homes and properties.

A war of attrition has costs that go beyond monetary.

Time and again people have heard promises made and no solution delivered.

You and your Inquiry committee saw first-hand the mental anguish and physical strain people in our communities were under.

Again to quote your words in your report: “...*the intensity of the emotion that could not be masked. These communities are hurt and angered by the effects PFAS contamination, and the delays and inadequacies in the response to its discovery, have had on their lives, their families and their communities.*”

The downward mental, physical and emotional spiral we are seeing from many within our communities is now reaching a critical point.

If the Government will not own this problem then surely they must take responsibility for any consequences.

Upon the report’s release many within our communities thanked you and your Inquiry committee for calling for action, compensation and justice.

We now ask you and the committee, in a new Federal Parliament, to set aside any party “line” on this issue. We ask you to ignore the empty assurances of senior Defence and other Government officials. We ask that you look to both the growing concern in the United States as to health effects of PFAS exposure both in water supplies and the food chain. We want you to ensure Australia adopts the bi-partisan political response of Democratic and Republican representatives who are demanding action, accountability and driving legislative change.



Most importantly, we urge you to publicly tell our Parliament and our Government that no longer can they turn their back on thousands of Australians whose situation becomes more desperate by the day.

Regards,

Lindsay Clout, CAP President, Williamstown.

Dianne Priddle, CAP Oakey.

Dr P.J Spafford, CAP Katherine.

Supported by CAP members:

Anne Sibbel – Bullsbrook, West Australia.

Tracey Anton – Gippsland, Victoria.

Joanna Pickford – Richmond, NSW.