

MINUTES: Hazelwood Study Contract Steering Committee

Tuesday 28 July 2015, 10.00am

Room 15.01, Department of Health & Human Services

Attendees from Monash:

- Prof Judi Walker, Principal Investigator
- Prof Michael Abramson, Principal Investigator
- Ms Gillian Ormond, Project Manager

Attendees from DHHS:

- Prof Michael Ackland, Acting Chief Health Officer and **meeting Chair**
- Ms Nicola Stephens, Communicable Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance
- Dr Danny Csutoros, Environmental Health
- Ms Liz Hughes, Inquiry Response team
- Dr Andrew Neil, Health Protection Strategic Projects & Regulatory Policy and Acting Contract Manager

Apologies:

- Ms Carmel Flynn, Director, Health Protection Branch
- Ms Sandra Falconer, Manager, Environmental Health

1. Welcome

- The Chair welcomed all attendees and noted apologies.

2. Monash update

- Gillian provided the update and tabled the Project monthly status report dated 27 July 2015 and noted that:
- The Department has accepted interim report recently submitted.
- Monash has released the tender for Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews for the Adult Survey and Early Life Follow-Up study. The tender was provided to four organisations. Tender to close this Thursday 30 July 2015. Evaluation panel to meet on 13 August 2015.
- Monash has set a date for first community briefing – 11 August 2015, with two sessions that day. Posters and flyers developed to promote this event and tabled. Also noted that Sale will be announced as the comparison community at this community briefing.
- Database management meeting was held on 14 July 2015. Training provided to staff at this meeting to ensure correct database protocols are followed by study researchers.
- Several of the streams have met – Adult Survey, Schools Study and the Latrobe Early Life Follow-Up study – to ensure consistency between various stream documents, information forms and consent forms. Correct terminology is particularly important for data linkage to certain datasets – such as Medicare and Ambulance Victoria.

- Have finalised a date for Judi and Michael to present at the Health Protection Branch Master-class: Friday 11 September, 10.00am – 11.00am. This will be a general update on the Study. Further, more specialised presentations can be given in the future, if the Department would like.
- Ongoing community engagement in Morwell and Sale. Study researchers have met a number of local organisations, with people pleased that Sale has been selected as the comparison community. Wellington Shire has provided good support from the Mayor down. In particular, Judi had a very good meeting with the local Probus Club, where there were 100 members present.
- Judi is also regularly meeting with Latrobe City Council. This is valuable as Council has an ongoing relationship with many community groups – building upon this network is a good 'marketing' opportunity and allows promotion of the Study and the community briefings.

Adult Survey:

- Working group is meeting every fortnight. Current issues for this study: ethics amendments, nominal roll determination for list of recruits and the recruitment protocol.
- Victorian Electoral Commission has been contacted regarding access to the electoral roll as an aid to populating the nominal roll.
- A protocol for the piloting of the adult study is currently being developed. Piloting will allow further refining of the questionnaire to ensure it is a robust research tool.

Schools study – psychological impact stream:

- Formal approval received from Department of Education & Training to conduct research in local schools
- A communications specialist has reviewed the project information sheet and consent form. Have commenced piloting of the study questionnaire in schools.
- There are ongoing engagement activities with all local schools to build support for participation and all schools who have been approached are now on board.

Early Life Follow-Up study – child health and development stream:

- Revisions to the ethics application for anonymous data linkage were submitted to the University of Tasmania on 6 July 2015. Further discussions have been held with Maternal & Child Health staff about further developing nominal roll of participants.
- Judi reported that some challenges have arisen in their work with Latrobe City Council, especially in the occasional silos of areas across the organisation. This reinforces the need for on-going personal engagement across different areas within Council. To assist in breaking down silos, Monash has set up a joint working group which includes the Council CEO.
- Further piloting of Latrobe Early Life Follow-Up documents is occurring with parents.

Community wellbeing stream:

- Monash has commenced individual interviews with key informants.
- Monash has organised focus groups to occur in August for Moe and Traralgon. Three other groups currently being organised for vulnerable groups. Focus groups will proceed with a planned outline, informed by a report submitted to the department this week and tabled at today's meeting: Coal Mine Fire Initial Impact on Community Health & Wellbeing Project – Federation University (see also further discussion of this report in 'Other business'. By next meeting, initial focus group will have been held - can provide info to next steering group. Pamela Wood could also attend DH to provide an update.
- Archival collection of various media articles is underway.

Older persons study:

- Monash provided a response to the department about some concerns raised by DHHS regarding parts of this study. Monash has incorporated some of the suggestions raised by the department and provided reasoning why others were not incorporated. Judi also noted that there was considerable interest in this study from Probus Club members.
- First focus group for this study to occur on 18 August 2015.

Hazelinks:

- Monash has submitted a data application to Ambulance Victoria and are waiting on a response. This application would allow individual ambulance events to be linked with participants in other streams – particularly the respiratory and cardiovascular streams.

Michael Ackland acknowledged the large amount of work conducted by Monash and thanked Monash staff for the report provided.

3. Previous actions

- Andrew briefly summarised actions and outcomes from the last Contract Steering Group meeting 24 June 2015. Of on-going interest was the issue of working with the department's Data Linkage Unit. Michael Abramson noted that Monash was yet to put in a written request and indicated that Monash would let the department know when the request was about to be submitted. If the response from the Unit was delayed again, Michael Ackland indicated that the Health Protection Branch would draft a letter from the Deputy Secretary to the relevant Deputy Secretary overseeing the Unit to ensure a prompt response to Monash.

4. Other business

- Intervention Adult Survey Nominal Roll: Michael Abramson indicated that Monash would meet with the Victorian Electoral Commission to try and obtain the electoral roll to assist in communication with community members to increase study participation. Michael Abramson also acknowledged that participation in research projects was not the core business of the VEC and that Monash had been informed that a response to their request may take some time. Michael Abramson noted that if a period of months passed without a positive response from the VEC, then the CATI survey would be delayed. Monash may have to ask the department to seek involvement of senior staff (perhaps even the Minister) to

advocate for access to the electoral roll. Michael Ackland noted that the department would be very happy to provide assistance if required.

- Queries from local community groups: Judi and Michael Abramson discussed an email query they had received from a local community group requesting the Terms of Reference outlines in the tender document used by the department to seek interested organisations to conduct the study. Judi noted that as this document was publicly available, the link was forwarded to the group. The local community group expressed concern about the implications of clause 8.1.4 of the document which states:

The successful tenderer will be required to discuss and agree with the Chief Health Officer on the format and contents of the annual progress reports and the final progress report.

Judi noted that the group may have concerns that this clause could limit the independence of the study. In relation to this issue, Michael Ackland noted that the department has a legal obligation and probity requirement to oversee the contract to ensure public funds are managed appropriately. He also suggested that if local community groups would like further information about this, they would be very welcome to contact his office. Judi noted this offer from the Chief Health Officer.

Michael Abramson also noted that in reference to the independence of the study, the University had sought and received permission to include a clause in the contract (see clause 8.13) which includes the following statement:

...the Department grants, and the contractor accepts, a non-exclusive, irrevocable, perpetual, world-wide, royalty-free licence (including a right to sub-licence) to use, reproduce, publish, communicate to the public, modify, adapt, and exploit (excluding the right to commercialise) the Project Intellectual Property for the purpose of the Contractor publishing or publicly presenting the Project outcomes for technical, scientific or educational purposes.

- Update on the Community Briefing: See also hard-copy flyer tabled at today's meeting. The first community briefing will be held on Tuesday 11 August, at Kernot Hall, Morwell, with two sessions available for members of the public. As these briefings are the first to be held, they are an important part of the study. Judi and Michael Abramson will brief community members and will inform them about activities so far – such as the interim report. Each stream leader will also present at this briefing. Media have been invited to the event, and media statements about each stream have been prepared to assist in information provision. The briefings will also include a time for questions from attendees. Tim Owen will attend on behalf of the department.
- Hazelwood Health Study Project Manager: Michael Abramson advised that Monash's Project Manager, Gillian Ormond, has resigned from the position. Monash has commenced the recruitment process for a Senior Project Manager. Michael Ackland thanked Gillian for her significant work in helping to establish the study.
- Other HR issues:

Monash advised that their media contact Rachel Fergusson has also resigned and will be replaced by Adam Redman.

ACTION: Monash to provide Adam's details to the department's Media Unit via Bram Alexander.

- Monash Disaster Resilience Initiatives: Judi advised that she has been invited to speak at this annual forum, as Professor of Rural Health, and will discuss community resilience using the Hazelwood study as an example. Judi noted that the Hazelwood study will generate a significant amount of data on community resilience, which will be of interest to forum attendees.
- Coal Mine Fire Initial Impact on Community Health & Wellbeing Project – summary report: This report had been sent to the department by Monash in the previous week. Judi noted that it was prepared by Federation University as a completely separate piece of work and has not been funded through the department's funding of the long-term health study. Judi noted that this report is not an output of the study. It would be useful, however, to inform the focus groups for the community resilience stream.

Judi also noted that it was proposed that this report would be put up on the study website. Andrew noted a concern regarding some of the terminology used to compare the events of Morwell with other natural disasters. Liz questioned the appropriateness of putting this document, which is not an output of the study, onto the study website.

ACTION: Judi indicated that she would take the concerns regarding terminology to Federation University and would reconsider the proposal to put the report onto the study website and would provide advice on this at the next steering committee

Meeting closed 11am.

Next meeting: 10.00am – 11.00am, Tuesday 25 August, room 15.01, Department of Health & Human Services.