

MINUTES: Hazelwood Study Contract Steering Committee

Tuesday 25 August 2015, 10.00am

Room 15.01, Department of Health & Human Services

Attendees from Monash:

- Prof Judi Walker, Principal Investigator (via telephone)
- Prof Michael Abramson, Principal Investigator
- Ms Gillian Ormond, Project Manager

Attendee from Federation University:

- A/Prof Pamela Wood

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
- Ms Deborah Sykes, Health Protection Strategic Projects & Regulatory Policy, new contract manager

Apologies:

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

1. Welcome

- The Chair welcomed all attendees and noted apologies. The Chair also noted Deborah's first attendance at a Steering Committee meeting; both Andrew and Deborah will attend upcoming meetings until handover is completed.

2. Monash update

- Gillian provided the update and tabled the Project monthly status report dated 20 August 2015 and noted that:
- CATI tender closed on 30 July with two applications. The tender evaluation panel have met and are inviting both tenderers to present on Wednesday 26 August 2015. Monash anticipates that they will be able to announce successful tenderer at next Steering Committee meeting.
- The first Community Briefing was conducted in Morwell on 11 August, with two sessions. Main purpose of the briefing was to introduce the team to the community. Presentations were given by all stream leaders and Sale was announced as the comparison community. Two further briefings were held Monday 24 August 2015 in Sale. One issue that arose at these sessions is the requests from a number of workers in Morwell to be included in the study (see other business).

- Judi also noted that while Monash are required to conduct one community briefing each year, additional briefings may be beneficial as they are excellent avenues for recruiting to the study.
- Judi also highlighted the need to recruit Sale community representatives onto the Community Advisory Committee via an expression of interest process. Representatives from Wellington Shire Council and Central Gippsland Health Service will also be on CAC. There are 29 different community groups in Sale; there is a need for study researchers to utilise these community groups to assist recruiting efforts.
- A database management meeting was held on 14 July 2015 to continue staff training so that standardised protocols are followed when study databases are used.
- Interviews for project manager to replace Gillian have taken place.

Adult survey:

- Ethics amendment has been approved.
- Victorian Electoral Commission reminder email has been sent, outlining ethics amendments to support access to electoral roll for individual mailing addresses to potential study recruits. Michael Abramson noted that the response from the VEC to date had not been so positive. Michael Abramson will provide an update on this issue at the next Steering Committee meeting: there may be a need for DHHS to make representations to the VEC to assist in obtaining access to the electoral roll.

Schools' study:

- At the Traralgon junior and senior campuses of the Anglican school, there are 163 eligible students. 22% of eligible students consented to a full formal pilot of the schools' study, which has just been conducted.
- 20 other schools have also been approached - none have declined in Morwell, but four outside Morwell have. Judi is also working on a local media communications' strategy to promote the schools' study to increase positive responses.

ELF study:

- Ethics approval obtained for data linkage. Monash and Tasmania University are continuing talks with data custodians regarding specific consenting requirements for data linkage.
- Another meeting with DHHS Data Linkage Unit planned for 27 August. Monash may require further support from Chief Health Officer and Andrew to work with DLU.
- Piloting of revised information sheet, consent and questionnaire was organised for another school, however low turnout meant that school staff volunteered to review/pilot these documents.

Community Wellbeing Stream:

- A/Prof Wood noted that this stream has two main aspects:
 - Interviews with those who participate in wellbeing services.
 - Focus groups.
- Both are designed to obtain a full understanding of community perceptions on wellbeing and recovery. Focus groups currently being conducted in Moe and in surrounding community of Traralgon.
- Media analysis is also being conducted, including social media. An area of interest is the potential disconnect between media coverage and actual community wellbeing.

Older persons study:

- First pilot focus group conducted on 20 August 2015. Five people attended and the session lasted approximately two hours. This will inform next focus group design.
- Another focus group is planned for 30 September 2015. Additional focus groups for family members and carers of older people planned for 18 September and 6 October 2015.

Hazelinks:

- The application for access to data from Ambulance Victoria is still waiting on a response from Ambulance Victoria.

3: Previous actions / outstanding issues.

- Federation University: Coal Mine Fire Initial Impact on Community Health and Wellbeing Project - summary report. Andrew raised some concerns with this report, especially issue of it being placed on study website when it is not a product of the long-term health study. A/Prof Wood noted that there was very little literature of events which had a similar duration to Hazelwood mine fire. Danny noted that the Christchurch earthquakes in New Zealand were similar in that aftershocks were impacting communities for weeks after the initial serious quake.

After further discussion, Michael Abramson noted that de-linking this study from Hazelwood study website would be appropriate.

4. Other business

- **Audit of the Adult Survey:** by school research governance office. This office randomly selects studies from time to time to audit and have requested reviewing the Hazelwood Long-term health study contract between Monash and DHHS. Michael Abramson raised the question of DHHS having concerns about this, given the contract is commercial in confidence.

ACTION: Andrew to follow up with DHHS Legal.

OUTCOME: DHHS notes that the school research governance office would audit many contracts, all of which are commercial in confidence, and would expect that this office would ensure that confidentiality was maintained with the study contract.

- **Inclusion of businesses in Morwell in Adult Survey:** Michael Abramson noted that under current study scope, people who worked in Morwell at the time of the mine fire, but were not resident in Morwell, are not part of the study. A number of staff who worked in Morwell attended the recent community briefings and have asked to be included in the study. Michael Abramson also noted that emergency responders were continuing to apply to be included in the study.

Michael Abramson noted that Monash does not have a sampling frame for recruiting such participants. To do so would also raise financial issues around mission creep.

Liz noted that an agreed script may need to be prepared to assist both DHHS and Monash respond to calls for inclusion of workers in the study. All agreed.

ACTION: Andrew to prepare draft words.

OUTCOME: Draft words prepared: *The Hazelwood Long-term Health Study is assessing potential health effects from the Hazelwood mine fire event in 2014 in residents who lived in Morwell at the time of the mine fire. Emergency responders are not included in this study unless they were resident in Morwell at the time of the mine fire. All emergency response organisations have occupational health and safety programs to monitor employees' health.*

- **Annual report format:** Monash submitted an outline of the proposed annual report format. This was endorsed by the Committee.
- **Upcoming Health Protection Branch Masterclass:** Judi and Michael Abramson to present on Friday 11 September in DHHS.

Other business as required:

- **Request for early study results:** Michael Abramson noted that he had been asked by Monica Kelly from the Hazelwood Inquiry Secretariat if preliminary study results would be available for the Inquiry. Michael noted that he had responded that no results would be available for the Inquiry given the long-term structure of the study.
- **Queries from a local community group:** Liz asked for an update on outcome of discussions with local community groups that had expressed concern about independence of Monash researchers (raised at last Steering Committee meeting on 28 July 2015 and minuted). Judi reported that she had been able to have informal discussions with the group to allay their concerns.
- **Extending Steering Committee meetings to 90 minutes:** It was noted that Steering Committee meetings were being rushed towards the conclusion of the meeting.

OUTCOME: meeting room for future has been booked for 90 minutes, with the proviso that the Committee continue to aim to finish within 60 minutes.

Meeting closed 11.10am.

Next meeting: 10.00am Tuesday 27 October, room 15.01, Department of Health & Human Services.

PLEASE NOTE: The September Steering Committee meeting has been cancelled at the request of Monash staff who were unable to attend.