

TRANSCRIPT

ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the CFA training college at Fiskville

Melbourne — 15 June 2015

Members

Ms Bronwyn Halfpenny — Chair

Mr Tim McCurdy — Deputy Chair

Mr Simon Ramsay

Mr Tim Richardson

Mr Bill Tilley

Ms Vicki Ward

Mr Daniel Young

Staff

Executive officer: Dr Greg Gardiner

Research officer: Dr Kelly Butler

Witness

Mr Mick Tisbury, United Firefighters Union of Australia.

**Necessary corrections to be notified to
executive officer of committee**

The CHAIR — On behalf of the committee I welcome Mr Mick Tisbury to this hearing. The Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 provides for the committee to take evidence, and the transcript of this hearing will be made public in due course. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript.

Following your presentation we would like to ask you questions. I will pass it over to you. We are sorry that we are running a bit behind schedule. Perhaps firstly you could give a bit of an introduction to yourself and your experiences.

Visual presentation.

Mr TISBURY — My name is Mick Tisbury. I will try and pump through this as quickly as I can because I know we are under the pump now. I am a senior station officer in the MFB. I have been in the job for about 26 years as a professional firefighter. I first attended Fiskville when I was doing my station officer's course as a candidate and have been an instructor up there on numerous occasions. I have got those following awards and commendations.

I am a member of the UFU branch committee of management, and I was also a business transition manager for the MFB on FOLD, which was the project team that designed, developed and built VEMTC Craigieburn.

June 2012, to give you a little bit of background, was when the UFU was notified about the quality of water. Plugger sent me a photo on the phone, that photo that you saw with the green water coming out of the side of the pumper. I have been trying to get to the truth and find out what has been going on up there. As an instructor I was very concerned that I have unknowingly subjected recruits and SO candidates up there. I trusted them, they trusted me and I feel like I have let them down. It has been an all-consuming issue for me. It has taken a bit of a toll, but I just kept going because I knew the truth needed to come out and it was the right thing to do.

The water contamination: you all know that Brian Potter blew the whistle on the joint in the *Herald Sun* in December 2011, and then when that first became public the UFU had real concerns. We were contacted by members who had spent a lot of time up there, saying 'What does this mean to us?', and we had an HSR up there who was able to get some of the water results and flip them down to us, to the union office.

I knew nothing about water standards, to be quite honest, and chemicals and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* meant nothing to me. So I just started googling stuff and trying to find out what I could. As I was googling stuff and through FOI and every other means, I came across reports that the CFA had commissioned, and I started collating those reports. Incidentally those reports that I managed to get my hands on, WorkSafe were given copies of them, so they knew about them too when they were doing their investigation.

Since 1988 there has been a series of independent reports, some commissioned by the CFA, which have demonstrated clearly that the soil and water is contaminated. I refer to paragraph 103 of my written submission, which starts going through them. I will just go through them one by one. The first report I came across was the 1988 A. S. James report. Regarding the contaminated dam water, this is a direct quote out of the report:

... this risk is not acceptable and the materials must be removed from the site and disposed of in a suitable manner.

I believe that report is the one that Alan Bennett refers to, that he had to fight CFA to get his hands on so the doctors could find out what was actually wrong with him.

Then appendix D, inside key correspondence of the EPA 2014 report, on 9 May 1996 there was a report. Pictures confirm that dam 1 caught fire and burnt for over 4 hours. As you are aware, water is not supposed to burn, especially for up to 4 hours. This is another direct quote. It should be noted:

... that people have an extremely high risk of ingesting water from dam 1 during drills on the FLP ... and there are risks of contamination getting into Barwon water catchment area.

The recommendation was to close the FLP immediately and clean out dams 1 and 2. That was back in 1996. We had another one in 1996, the Minenco environmental services report. It recommends immediate actions by

CFA to remove and bio-remediate heavily contaminated soils from dams 1 and 2. Urgent action was required to commence the clean-up of the contamination of the dams.

Obviously they did not like the answers in those two reports, so they went and got another mob, Diomides, for an environmental site assessment. All samples from dams exceeded Dutch C value, requiring immediate management and remediation. Dutch C value is the intervention value, so it is like a level of contaminants in that soil that requires immediate management and remediation and notification to the EPA.

So then they got another mob. They got the Coffey report for the same year, 1996. Total petroleum hydrocarbons, once again the same, exceed Dutch C value in dams 1 and 2. Also copper, chromium, nickel, lead, zinc all exceeded Dutch C value in 1, 2 and Lake Fiskville. Therefore this requires immediate management and remediation and notification to the EPA.

In November 1996 there was a CRA ATD report which found heavy soil and water contamination exceeding the guidelines and recommended immediate remediation and the installation of a water treatment plant. Then, in 1997, Rio Tinto.

What you can see here is a fair bit of shopping around. You do not like the answer from one mob so you go to another mob, and they give you the same answer, so you keep going to another one, and you do nothing about it. It just beggars belief. In 1997 Rio Tinto are commissioned to provide a remediation action plan for the old fire pits only. The dams and the drum burial pits are not included in this plan. Despite knowing that they are heavily contaminated, the CFA senior management still did nothing about it.

In 1998 a GHD report found extensive and significant contamination in dams 1 and 2. In 1999 a Rio Tinto report confirmed the dams still had not been remediated. When you went up there the other day you could see that they still have not been remediated. They are just about to get to it. Well, they have been just about to get to it since 1988, and Christ knows how long earlier, but these are the only reports I have been able to get my hands on. Then there is a big gap. Now I do not know whether I just have not been able to find those reports or whether they stopped asking the questions because they did not like the answers they were getting.

In February 2007 there was an Ecowise report. This report was the first report that I saw where all of a sudden the CFA started testing for this stuff called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. It was found in dam 1 only. The safe levels for this organism — sorry, for this toxic bacteria — in water, according to the Australian water guidelines, is less than 10 organisms per 100 millilitres. The results show that the tests on the water that they took out of dam 1 was 33 000 organisms per 100 millilitres. Training was not stopped. Our people were still being exposed to this water.

The documents, which I provided to you, show that James Stitz, a senior manager in the CFA — still employed there — was telephoned and emailed the results by the consultants. In bold on the bottom of the water report it says:

... the presence of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* at these levels indicates the water is unsuitable for primary contact.

That means you do not get it on your skin. As you saw in Plugger's video, we were really wet. That same report showed that even though the standard was supposedly being adhered to by the CFA up there for *E. coli* — it is supposed to be less than 10 organisms per 100 millilitres — the *E. coli* levels were in excess of 450 organisms per 100 millilitres.

I knew nothing about this *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, so I just started googling stuff. I found out that during the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill it was used. It was deliberately introduced into the water to try and eat, metabolise the oil. This organism can live on hydrocarbons. But what it does is it causes lung infections; pneumonia; eye infections; external ear infections; skin infections; blood poisoning; urinary tract infections; wound infections, particularly burn wounds, which is really handy when you are a firefighter, working out on a fire trail. It is antibiotic resistant, so a bit like golden staph, and if it colonises in the lungs, urinary tract or kidneys, it can be fatal.

Interestingly enough, if this was a naturally occurring organism — and we all know that dam 1 is linked to dam 2, to Lake Fiskville, to the pit — you would find it in all of those water bodies. They only found it in dam 1 in February 2007. Later on the reports show that they also found it in dam 2, but not in the initial testing. So

dam 2 they have tested, and there is nothing in there. Six months later they test both dams. Yes, it is all over the place.

I did not know what this *Pseudomonas* was, so I started ringing around. I looked for this Ecowise company. They were not in the *Yellow Pages*. I just flicked through the *Yellow Pages* and started calling some environmental companies, asking them, 'What is this stuff?'. Because I started having these suspicions that maybe it has been introduced into the water. Nobody had heard about it. The eighth company I called was a mob called ALS. I have since found out ALS bought out Ecowise. I spoke to a bloke there named [REDACTED]. He was a scientist. He told me that he was part of an experiment with CFA where they deliberately introduced the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* into the water supply as a biological way of cleaning up the hydrocarbons in the water. I have got no problems with trying some organic or bio-organic experiment in a controlled atmosphere, but you — —

Mr TILLEY — Can I just stop you there.

Mr TISBURY — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — What was that bloke's name?

Mr TISBURY — [REDACTED] He is still currently employed — —

Just incidentally, on that, I gave that information to WorkSafe. I gave the contact number to WorkSafe, because I spoke to them on the phone. WorkSafe then contacted me and said, 'Nobody has ever heard of this bloke [REDACTED]. We can't contact him. We contacted ALS. We can't contact him'. I thought, 'He's obviously moved on'. Just prior to this, at the beginning of this year, I just rang up ALS, just to see how it would go. Same number. Guess who answers the phone? [REDACTED] So WorkSafe, maybe they pressed the wrong number, I do not know, but — —

Mr TILLEY — Mick, are you prepared to provide the committee with those details?

Mr TISBURY — Yes, mate.

Mr TILLEY — Contact details? You have already got them?

Mr TISBURY — Yes.

Ms WARD — It is in the submission.

Mr TILLEY — Yes, okay.

Mr TISBURY — It is in the submission.

Mr TILLEY — Still playing catch up.

Mr TISBURY — So [REDACTED] told me the CFA deliberately introduced the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* into the water supply. If you are going to do something like that, do it in a controlled environment. Do not expose your people to it, and if you do bugger up and do expose your people to it, tell your people what you have done, make sure you get some medical advice and look after the people you have exposed. Do not cover this up, which is what I am saying CFA have deliberately done.

Then in 2007 is the Wynsafe report. Now it recommends that class A standard water plus *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* levels of 10 organisms per 100 millilitres or less should be the target for firefighting water at training grounds. Testing has shown that the standard was generally achievable and the adoption of this standard brings it into line with the CFA draft SOP 9.37 entitled 'Recycled Water Use and Management Of', which states the class A recycled water may be used for operational activities, including training. However, the SOP also states that class A and B recycled water may not be used for training purposes. Even in this one document, their own SOP, it is like an each-way bet: 'Yes, it's safe for training'; 'No, it's not safe for training'.

This is the 2009 SRS sludge report. I want you to remember this one. It is in tab 9 of my written statement. It shows that the pond sludge contained TPHs at 60 000 micrograms per kilogram. This is classified as category A level contaminated soil. These are direct quotes:

At this concentration this soil is banned from disposal to landfill.

It then gives an estimation of how much it is going to cost to treat it, bio-remediate it and then dispose of it. It is illegal. The EPA says it is illegal to remove this stuff off your site. You have to bio-remediate it for a number of years to get it to a safe enough level to then go and dump it in toxic landfill.

On 6 July Mick Bourke gets on ABC Ballarat — and I have included the transcript in there — and denies any knowledge of this report all. Just remember that one. That is the SRS.

In 2009 is the Wynsafe report. This is not back in the 1980s or 1990s. This is now 2009, the same year Mick became the CEO of the CFA and the same year he left as head honcho at EPA.

Dam 1 is known to be heavily contaminated with heavy metals and petroleum hydrocarbons from past practices and continues to be contaminated with firefighting foam and hydrocarbons from the flam PAD.

It also states:

It should be noted that the management plan has NOT been adhered to as training has continued even though water quality is unacceptable.

Like I said, 2009 was the year that Mick Bourke left the EPA and joined the CFA. The CFA changed the water standard in consultation, coincidentally, with the EPA. They decided that the current standard of less than 10 organisms per 100 millilitres, which is what the Australian water guidelines say, for Fiskville — not any other joint in the country, just Fiskville — it should be okay to raise the standard and expose their firefighters to 150 organisms per 100 millilitres. Even when they upped the ante and allowed us to be exposed to more organisms, they were still regularly failing to meet that 150 organism test.

There was another Wynsafe report in 2010, which found heavy contamination in the dams as well as unsafe levels of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Just say you believe in the tooth fairy and for some unknown reason nobody in the CFA had ever seen any one of those reports — they had all been shredded and locked away and nobody had ever seen them. The *Herald Sun* runs an article on 11 December 2011. There is a lot of press and a lot of media. They announce the Joy report. WorkSafe are allegedly investigating and going up there and looking at this. They have engaged a heap of experts.

In February 2012 — this is well before the UFU became aware of the water contamination issues — there was an ALS water investigation report. It says:

Sludge in dam 1 is considered category A industrial waste

and

Water in dam 2 is outside the re-use guidelines’.

Appendix 1 test results show that arsenic, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, zinc, benzene, toluene and xylene, which are all known carcinogens, were above the safe exposure limits in dam 1.

On 22 February 2012 an email marked urgent was sent from Justin Justin to Lex de Man and Mick Bourke regarding that very ALS report, and these are direct quotes from the email from Justin Justin:

We should act quickly to remedy the situation to ensure we have steps in place ensuring water quality for firefighting is of no concern.

SRS be engaged to quote on the removal of sludge —

SRS is the sludge report that Mick Bourke knew nothing about —

from dam 1 and remediation with these works to be scheduled as a matter of urgency.

They are an open and transparent organisation, the CFA.

I have not released this report to other parties and will only do so once I have your approval to do same.

That was in February. We did not know about the water until Plugger sent us that photo in June. Bourke was on the radio saying there was nothing wrong with the water. If you take them at their word and they never had one

report, they never saw any of those documents and they never even looked at their water testing regime, that confirms that they saw that. Those people at least had that report, and they still allowed our people — MFB and CFA professional and volunteer firefighters — to continue using that water until the UFU stopped the use of that water on 15 June. Then they came out on the radio and said, ‘There’s nothing wrong with the water’. WorkSafe have got that. They had all that information.

Mr RAMSAY — They were not recycling water from dam 1 directly back to — —

Mr TISBURY — Dam 1 to dam 2 and then straight in the pit, mate. There is no water treatment plant. You have been up there. You have got one bubbler, and that is it in dam 1. The water test results they got from dam 1 to dam 2 were failing. There is no fancy computerised system there. It is a pipe underground. There is dam 1, dam 2 and the pit, and they were sucking the water out of dam 2 and out of the pit.

On 19 June Plugger sent me the photos and said it is worse than ever. On 20 June the UFU writes to CEO Mick Bourke and MFB CEO, Nick Easy, requesting all training cease pending the appropriate tests and confirmation that the water is fit for use. On 21 June 2012 the MFB writes back to the UFU. The MFB stopped their training straight away and pulled their people out. The CFA writes back a statement that the water being used met the relevant health parameters. Bugged if I know what they were.

In addition to the repeated requests to the CFA, the UFU repeatedly requested from the MFB their testing regime, results and all information regarding the quality of the water. These requests were formal, in writing and also via the MFB UFU consultation committee’s process. The MFB refused to even look at the documents that we had gotten. They did not want to know about them. They will spin that — I know they will — because they eventually did look at them, but that was after they took us to Fair Work Australia in October. Prior to that the UFU wrote to Nick Easy, requesting an urgent meeting of the branch committee of management of the UFU and the executive leadership team to discuss this very issue, and they refused.

On 12 October the MFB notifies staff that training will recommence at Fiskville. On 3 October WorkSafe director Jarrod Edwards — incidentally, just prior to going to WorkSafe Jarrod Edwards was an executive manager of the MFB — wrote this letter to Sherry Herman, who has since left the CFA as well:

WorkSafe was advised that control of risk to health and safety from the use of recycled water is being achieved by the exclusive use of mains/town water for firefighting training at Fiskville.

WorkSafe acknowledges the continued operation of the Fiskville training facility in accordance with the risk controls associated with dangerous goods and firefighting water presented during inspector visits conducted since 6 December 2011.

They have been going there since 2011. Our firefighters have been exposed from 2011 until June. They know we have been using the contaminated water that has not been treated.

In 2012 we lodged a grievance against the MFB because Peter Rau of the MFB comes down and orders our recruits back to Fiskville. He does not tell the instructors; he does not tell the senior management that were training at the time. There is a direct email to our recruits. The recruits are the most vulnerable people we have in the organisation. They are submitting to this training to be firefighters. They have been trying to get into our job for 20 years. They are passionate; they will do anything they get told to do to get through that recruit course.

During this grievance process, the MFB finally agreed to look at the limited documentation. Prior to this they had been refusing to even look at the documentation. They finally agreed to look at it. Early in 2012 Peter Rau was our deputy chief fire officer. At the time he was my boss at training. He was also my boss in charge of the FOLD project — that is, the future of operational learning and development. He told me, as well as others — and this is after Fiskville came out, and remember that he was the OIC at Fiskville between 2005 and 2007 — that he has a series of serious medical conditions and his doctor has told him that he believes those medical conditions were caused by the time he spent at Fiskville.

That is the thing that really gets to me the most: he was our deputy chief fire officer. He also told me he was part of the Slater and Gordon class action. He knew firsthand from the advice of his specialists the damage you can cause to people, yet he then went down and ordered our recruits back to Fiskville. He was going to submit our young kids back to what he has — and right now he is off indefinitely on sick leave.

On 18 October the MFB delegation, including Peter Rau, conducts a site visit to Fiskville. That inspection report is attached at tab 14 in the statement. The MFB never returned to Fiskville. On 18 October the CFA installed two new tanks replacing dam 1 and dam 2. The tanks — —

The CHAIR — Sorry, Mick, we have a number of questions that we would like to ask you, and we are running out of time.

Mr TISBURY — I am almost there. The tanks are 260 000 litres. All this information is in that attached document and the inspection. They are 260 000 litres each. Being a bit conservative, I did some calculations on how long that water was going to last us. One 50-ml hose — one of the hoses that we use — uses 450 litres a minute. Excluding the use of the hose reels and the monitors — the big water users on our trucks — just say we use 450-ml hoses connected to a pumper, because we have four deliveries on it, that is about 1800 litres a minute. Generally speaking MFB uses five pumpers at a time for a recruit course. This is the whole site. That is about 9000 litres a minute, so it is going to take you about 30 minutes to suck that tank dry.

That document states that tank 1 takes about 12 hours to fill. Tank 2 takes about five days to fill because your inlet, the feed, going into that tank 2 is about that big. It is just a little bit of black poly pipe. I do not know where they were getting the water from — typically 8 hours a day, five days a week. There is only one other water source there. People have asked me, ‘How did PFOS get into the tanks?’. I do not know. There was only one other water source that has confirmed PFOS in it.

In April 2014 MFB Craigieburn opens up the training college. Like I said, I was the business transmission manager on that job. We sought expert advice with regard to what was going on at Fiskville and the water quality. It was obviously becoming a big issue. We did not want to do the same thing up at this new joint, so we went to a mob called GHD — who incidentally did one of those reports for the CFA. There seemed to be some confusion about the water quality standards and what standards should be applied for firefighting and firefighting training. The MFB commissioned a mob called GHD to give us that advice. One of the blokes who gave us the advice actually used to sit on the committee who wrote the Australian water guidelines. That advice was that class A water was suitable for firefighting only, because it assumes that you are wearing a breathing apparatus, it assumes that you are only exposed to it one day a week and it assumes that you are only ingesting about 20 ml. That is about 20 ml there. I would suggest that you would suck in more than that in about 8 minutes, let alone 8 hours.

The MFB made the decision that the only safe water for training — we are not wearing BA, and we are in there for 8 hours a day, five days a week — is to go to the potable standard. The potable standard is what you get when you turn on your tap.

The CHAIR — Can we ask you some questions now? I worry about getting all the information in. We really need to ask you some questions. Could we stop there? Is that okay? Perhaps after the questions if we have missed a couple of things, then you might like to say a few things about that. My question is about the Joy report. As I understand it, when we went down to the public hearing, Robert Joy was saying that the reason why his investigation only went up to 1999 was mainly because they remodelled the PAD and therefore things such as water containment and all that sort of thing as well as the contamination really stopped there. It seems that there has been a whole lot of reports well after 1999, according to what you have told us. Can you explain how it would be that, according to Robert Joy and the information he had, it seemed that the problem only went up to 1999? That seems to be his view to this day.

Mr TISBURY — I think the evidence speaks for itself — that was just a crock. If you look at the title of the report, *Understanding the Past and Informing the Future*, if you want to know about what is going on in the future, you do not stop at 1999. The past includes anything prior to 2000 as well. You want to make sure, and you want to get to the truth and find out what your people have been exposed to and is it a safe place to be working at. You would not be cutting off at 1999, would you? You would be going until the present day.

Mr McCURDY — Those who were being trained at Fiskville, you were an instructor, were you or were they of the understanding that the water they were dealing with was potable or would they have been clearly told when they arrived that this water is not to be used for drinking?

Mr TISBURY — All we were told was that it was class A water, and none of us knew the difference between potable and class A. We thought class A was top of the charts. It is interesting; the CFA are now

wanting to go back to an even lower standard. We heard a bloke from Senversa bring it down to the industrial standard. That is the standard you put in your cooling towers at Yallourn power station; it is not for exposing people to. There is a real lot of confusion about what standard. We just got told it was safe. 'We have frogs in the dam so it must be okay'; that was the standard line.

Mr McCURDY — So people knew it was not to be drunk?

Mr TISBURY — There were signs in the cottages above all the sinks. The CFA tried to spin last week when we were up there that it was always that the cottages were connected to the town's main. That is just a crock. There are water tanks in every single one of the cottages, and there are signs over the top of the sinks saying, 'Do not drink the water. Boil before use'. So yes, there were signs up saying 'Don't drink the water'. But we were not going there and using the hose lines and taking a swig out of the hose lines. You were getting it in your mouth just by breathing. You saw by the sprays that just by doing your training you were getting a mouthful of water.

Mr RICHARDSON — Just to clarify for the record, Mick, the process of water exiting the PAD and where it flowed into relevant dams, could you just clarify that for the record?

Mr TISBURY — It flowed off the foam liquid PAD, off the back into a holding concrete tank and then it trickled into an interceptor, which is basically a concrete tank with three concrete walls in it. The water flowed over the top, and that captured the solids. Fuel floats on top of the water, as you know, so then that flowed into dam 1, and from dam 1 — and there is a bubbler, an aerator, in dam 1 — there was an underground pipe with some gravel in it and it floated into dam 2. From dam 2 there was a pumping station that would suck out for the safety lines, because there were two separate ring mains, and also the water that was for the firefighting lines would flow back into the pit — the open concrete pit — and there was another pumping station there sucking it out to charge all the firefighting lines.

Mr RICHARDSON — I understand from when we went there that dam 2 was the main source of that and that that loop continued?

Mr TISBURY — Yes.

Mr RICHARDSON — How does that contrast with practices now at Craigieburn, from the experiences now?

Mr TISBURY — At Craigieburn we re-use all the water, capture all the water, apart from where we use the foam at our petrochemical plant. That is a separate treatment plant, and that just gets treated and discharged to the sewers. So that does not get re-used, but the water gets re-used. It goes to 450 000-litre tanks underneath the ground. It goes through a treatment plant, which includes reverse osmosis and chlorination — a whole heap of technical stuff; that is why we paid the big bucks to get a technical bloke to come in and design it — then it goes to two above-ground 450 000-litre storage tanks and then it goes out to the firefighting.

Mr RICHARDSON — And that is still potable?

Mr TISBURY — At a potable standard, yes.

The CHAIR — Just on that, how much did that cost, roughly — the water treatment cost?

Mr TISBURY — It was \$750 000.

The CHAIR — How much was the CFA upgrade in 2000?

Mr TISBURY — I believe \$16.8 million was allocated by the last government. To just give you a little bit of perspective on the \$750 000, there are five training sites in Victoria. You could put a water treatment plant in all of them for change out of \$4 million. Remember that the last government up until June last year spent \$454 million on advertising only, so \$4 million is nothing.

Mr YOUNG — Could you tell us definitively what you believe the standard should be for firefighting training?

Mr TISBURY — Potable.

Mr YOUNG — Do you think that is achievable at Fiskville?

Mr TISBURY — No, I do not think it is achievable at Fiskville, because from what I have been able to ascertain — and like I say, I am not an expert, but I have spoken to experts — there is no proven system to remove PFOS yet. They have not come up with it; they have not developed it yet. The joint is heavily contaminated with PFOS. Remember — and I believe that bloke from AECOM confirmed it — the testing that they have done at Fiskville, the ground soil testing, the boring and all that, is not the whole site. They have not tested the whole site. It has been selective. CFA told the people from Cardno Lane Piper where they could and could not drill — where they could and could not test. I know that mound with all the drums up in the top corner near the walking track; that has not been tested. Somebody from Cardno Lane Piper told me that they wanted to test it and they were told they were not to test there.

Recently I had someone call me who was a contractor and who buried the drums of chemicals up there, to the north of that site, which we thought had never been used — to the north of the site right next to the creek. So that diversion creek that they have done around Lake Fiskville is going to do nothing, because they have buried all the chemical drums to the north of that. So it is still going to be flowing into Matt and Beccara's place; it is still going to be flowing into Beremboke Creek.

Mr YOUNG — Could that be achieved with infrastructure, like the water treatment plant that you have got at Craigieburn?

Mr TISBURY — No, because it does not suck out PFOS. There is no doubt that Fiskville has to be replaced. I reckon it needs to be replaced around the local planning area. This government has got to fund it and build a new training college out in that area, but build a safe one, make sure you have safe conditions of work. When we respond to a fire call, firefighters are exempt from the WorkCover legislation because we are going into an uncontrolled environment. We are going into an emergency for very good reasons. If we had to comply with that legislation, we would never be able to do the job we can do. But when we are training, we are not responding to an emergency, and that WorkCover legislation applies to everyone.

Just another thing, you talked about the Joy report and about why cut it off at 1999. I have been fortunate enough to see some of the statements that were given to Professor Joy by the people who submitted them. I did not know why this question would be asked. There was a series of questions on what type of chemicals had you known were destroyed there, been burnt there or been used as a fuel. They were all unknown and unnamed chemicals, apart from one. You would have to ask yourself, 'Why would this question be asked?'. If you had no prior knowledge of it, why would you be asking this question about this one particular chemical? That particular chemical was Agent Orange.

At the beginning of this year I was contacted by a bloke who said he was at the RAAF at Point Cook. I encouraged him to put in a submission, and I hope he bloody has. He says that when he was at Point Cook they used to take the Agent Orange to Fiskville to burn and use as a fuel, and in return they would get to use the facilities for nothing. I know that is historical, but to ask those questions about only the one chemical and none of the other myriad of chemicals, there must have been a report or somebody must have had some knowledge about it somewhere. Why not ask about benzene? Why not ask about toluene? Why only ask about Agent Orange?

Mr RAMSAY — Mick, in your submission you say you:

... have personally been abused, received death threats and been subjected to intimidation to attempt to keep me quiet ... even been spat at in front of my children.

Could you identify those people who did those things to you?

Mr TISBURY — The death threats I can't, because that was done over the phone. The person who spat on me, I can. His name is Martin Bona. He is a facilities manager up there, and the incident happened when I was down with my kids. It was the Queen's Birthday long weekend in 2013. At that time my four-year-old was a little baby and he was in one of those harness things, and I have got two little twins and they were either side of me. I did not retaliate because my kids were there.

Mr RAMSAY — Did they do that because you are highlighting the issues around water contamination at Fiskville?

Mr TISBURY — When I was spat on, the comment was, ‘That’s for Fiskville’.

Mr RAMSAY — Are you aware of the quality of water in the Ballan water supply that provides water to the Ballan community?

Mr TISBURY — It is supposed to be potable.

Mr RAMSAY — Do you know its colour?

Mr TISBURY — No. I am not a water-testing agent. That is why you get Central Highlands Water to do the water quality testing. They are the ones with the laboratory; they are the ones with all the expertise in it. It is supposed to be potable water. If they say it is potable, it is potable, because they have to meet certain criteria. They are also the same ones who were testing the water — not taking samples — at Fiskville, and theirs are the reports that we are referring to that show that time after time after time those water reports were coming back as having failed the criteria that the CFA put. They are not potable, but class A.

Mr RAMSAY — I mention that because we have received evidence that indicates that the water — this is going back a few years — was a sort of brown colour. We are talking about mains water.

Mr TISBURY — That would be — was that Barwon Water or something? You have to get onto them.

Ms WARD — Mick, thank you for your story. Has the CFA had a conversation with employees, with volunteers or with the UFU or DEPI about the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in dam 1? Was there a way for this bacteria to enter the water other than through human intervention, and why would the CFA introduce this bacteria, if they did?

Mr TISBURY — Yes, they did. No, not that I know of. I certainly have not spoken to UFU about it. What was the next question?

Ms WARD — Is there any other way for it to get into the dam other than through human intervention?

Mr TISBURY — Not at those levels, not at 33 000 — and if it was, you would find it in dams 1, 2 and 3, Lake Fiskville and the pit.

Ms WARD — Why did they introduce it?

Mr TISBURY — I was told it was a cheap and economical way of treating the hydrocarbons in the dams.

Ms WARD — What are the effects on people of having this in high levels?

Mr TISBURY — There are all those going back. There was a heap of lung infections, skin rashes, kidney infections, urinary tract infections, rashes. And if it colonises in your kidneys, liver and lungs, it can be fatal. Like I said, it is a bit like golden staph. You can throw as many antibiotics as you can at it; it is antibiotic resistant, but luckily unlike PFOS. PFOS, once you get into your system, you do not excrete or get rid of it; *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* you do.

Mr TILLEY — Very quickly, Mick, earlier during a conversation you said where drilling and samples could and could not been taken. Are you able to assist this inquiry specifically with identifying anyone to the committee that has given those directions? You have got to understand, there are rules of hearsay, jungle drums and all the rest of it. Have you got anybody you have had a direct conversation with or who has provided you with any substantial evidence that can support these claims?

Mr TISBURY — I used to get a lot of anonymous phone calls because I ended up becoming the spokesperson on this, so I got a lot of anonymous phone calls from people saying stuff. One was a Cardno Lane Piper employee, and he said he could not give me his name because he would do his job. I asked him to put a submission in to this committee confidentially or do it in camera, and I am hoping he has but I do not know whether he has or not.

The CHAIR — Just on that, I might be able to clear up that we did receive a submission that is a public submission, if we are talking about the Agent Orange. It was from a Graham West, and what he says is he was told that that is what was in the drums — just to clear that one up.

Mr TISBURY — No, this is something else. This is a Cardno Lane Piper employee.

The CHAIR — Sorry about that. I have added that one too.

Mr TILLEY — I was not going down the Agent Orange path. Let us say you have received an anonymous telephone call and you have had a further conversation at some stage, or is it during this same conversation — this anonymous call — that you have taken this information?

Mr TISBURY — It is the same call, yes.

Mr TILLEY — All in the same one conversation, all right.

Mr TISBURY — I am not all that flash on that Facebook stuff, but somebody posted on the Protectors Facebook thing saying the same thing. I do not know whether it is the same person or not, and I asked somebody who is pretty savvy on that to get back to them privately — however you do that. I gave them my number or the UFU office or this committee. They have not contacted me. I do not know whether they have contacted the committee.

Mr TILLEY — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thanks for coming in and presenting today. The information you have given us is invaluable. If we have any more questions, is it okay if we contact you, whether in writing or perhaps later on if you need to come back in, because there are probably many things that we need to ask in addition to what you have told us?

Mr TISBURY — Yes.

The CHAIR — It was really comprehensive, and I think we get a much better understanding of the situation in terms of the water contamination. Thank you.

Mr TISBURY — Thank you. No worries.

Witness withdrew.