

MEDIA RELEASE

**DEFENCE DEPARTMENT AND MINISTER MARISE
PAYNE MUST COME CLEAN ON RAAF
WILLIAMTOWN WATER CONTAMINATION SCANDAL.**

29 June, 2016

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) is calling on Defence Minister Marise Payne to establish an independent public inquiry into revelations by the Newcastle Herald that the Defence Department knew construction at the RAAF base at Williamtown NSW would cause off-site groundwater contamination and that the health of workers and the public would be put at risk.

AMWU NSW Secretary Tim Ayres said the Williamtown scandal had seen workers exposed to harmful chemicals on the site and the public exposed by contaminated groundwater being pumped off the base into adjoining residential areas.

"It is time for Defence Minister Marise Payne to account for what her department knew about the risks involved in the expansion of the RAAF base and to determine who was responsible," Mr Ayres said.

"Workers have been unwittingly exposed to harmful chemicals associated with chemical contamination of groundwater on the RAAF base and yet the Defence Department and its contractors have failed to protect them," he said.

"It is outrageous that several reports warned of the potential for contamination of residential areas if groundwater was pumped off the Williamtown base and even worse that work on expansion of the base was allowed to proceed regardless."

Mr Ayres said workers involved in the construction of new facilities for the Joint Strike Fighter at Williamtown had a right to go to work without the fear of having their health compromised by harmful chemicals.

"It is unacceptable that this project was permitted to proceed without proper protection for workers and the public and even worse that it went ahead when the hazards were known to the Defence Department, the RAAF and the Federal Government."

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Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

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