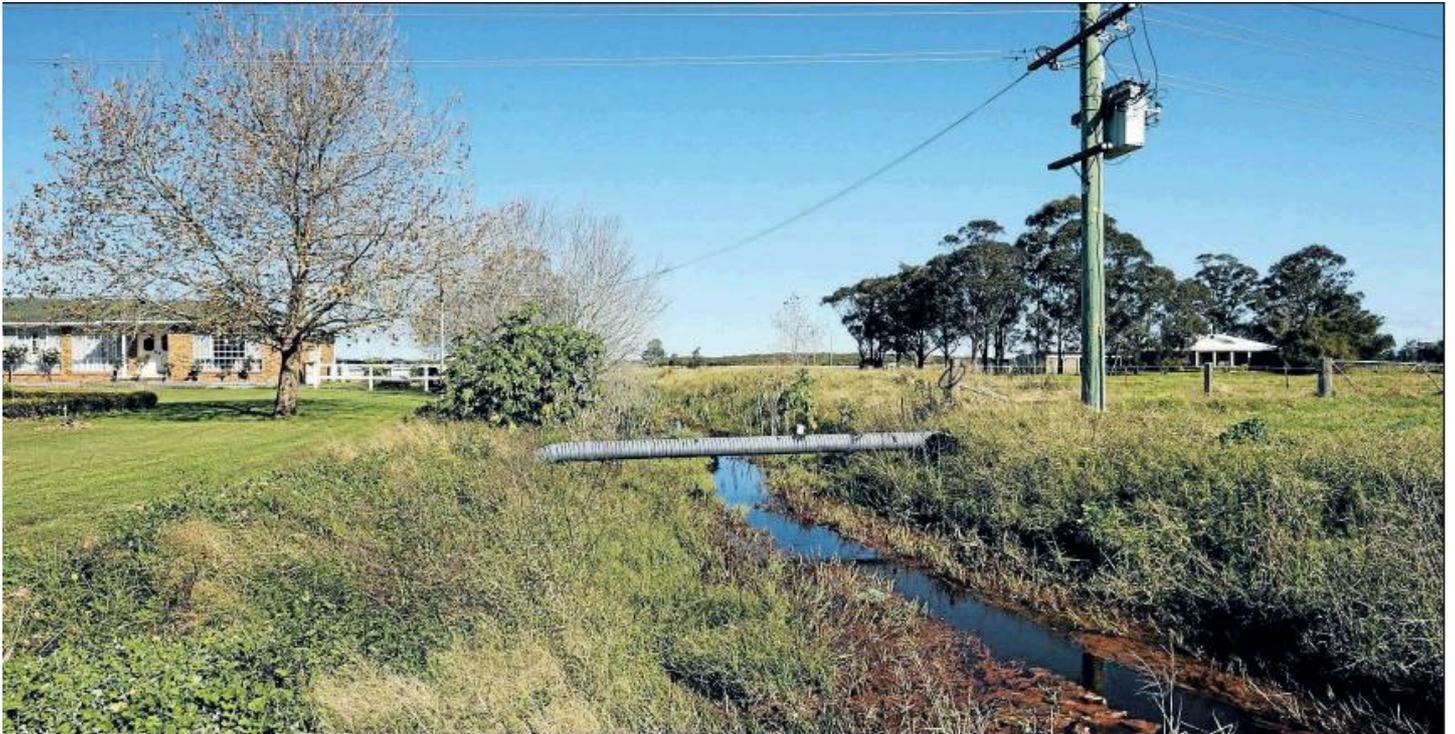


Shock levels found in Cabbage Tree drain

BY CARRIE FELLNER



EYE WATERING: Shock levels of firefighting contamination have been discovered in this drain. Five people living either side of it have been diagnosed with cancer since 2009. Picture: Simone De Peak



LONG ROAD: Irene Jordan was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013. Picture: Max Mason-Hubers

A DRAIN at the centre of cancer cluster fears on Cabbage Tree Road in Williamstown has shown up staggering levels of firefighting contamination, after exclusive testing was carried out for the *Newcastle Herald*.

The independent testing in Dawson's drain returned some of the highest readings recorded in Williamstown's contamination red zone. They were up to 34 times higher than the levels authorities reported were in the drain last year.

It comes amid revelations five people who have lived on, or spent significant periods of time at, the two properties either side of the drain have developed cancer since 2009, the youngest in his 30s.

The *Herald* approached Sandgate-based company Australian Laboratory Services to do the testing, but it refused on the grounds of "contractual restraints".

The samples were instead analysed by Eurofins and taken by Dr Steven Lucas from the University of Newcastle's school of environmental sciences.

They showed the chemical perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) at 92, perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) at 44 and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) at 4.2 micrograms per litre respectively.

The results were more than 1900 times the safe limit for PFOS and PFHxS in drinking water of .07 micrograms per litre, and about about 194 times the safe limit for recreational water (.7).

On the western side of the drain lived Lorelei Sneddon, who passed away from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2011.

The eastern side was formerly home to Ron and Irene Jordan and their son Luke. Ron Jordan lived at the property from 1992 to 2002 and remembers he thought it "really weird" that his horses were constantly ill.

The family frequently had Ms Jordan's sister, Marie Cadogan, over to stay. They would share in the vegetables from the garden. Luke would ask his mother if he could go fishing in the drain.

"I would tell him not to come back until he'd caught something," she said.

Irene Jordan developed breast cancer in 2013. A year later, Luke Jordan's wife noticed a strange lump in his neck. When he had it checked out, the specialists confirmed it was cancerous but said they had never seen a cancer like it before.

"It was a bit of a weird one," Mr Jordan, now 36, said. "It was lucky my wife saw it or in 12 months I might have been gone."

Ms Cadogan died of bowel cancer in 2015.

The Jordans moved away, and Gaylene Brown moved into the property about 15 years ago. She developed breast cancer last year.

Defence officials have informed Ms Brown that her bore water and dam had tested negative for the contamination. They also tested the drain, but never told her what the results were.

" They couldn't tell what type of cancer it was ... it was a bit of a weird one."

-Luke Jordan, cancer survivor.