

Community dialogue - meeting #12

Hi-Quality – Bulla Spoil Processing Facility

Meeting details

Date: 19 January 2022, 5.00pm to 6.30pm

Venue: Online (via Zoom)

Attendees:

Community representatives	
Anthony White	Controller, Sunbury SES
Chris O'Neill	No Toxic Soil Campaign
Graham Williams	Sunbury Residents Association
Heather Dodd	Local resident
Michael Osborne	Sunbury Business Association

Project representatives and guests	
Amy Watson	Partner, Forge Communications (Hi-Quality)
Lance Ingrams	Regional Manager, Victoria, Hi-Quality Group

Facilitator	
Todd Beavis	Founder and Principal, i.e. community

Purpose

The meeting was held to continue the dialogue between Hi-Quality and community representatives in relation to the establishment and operation of the Bulla Spoil Processing Facility to collect, treat and dispose of material from the tunnel boring machines on the West Gate Tunnel Project.

Agenda

Item	Discussion lead
Welcome back and expectations for 2022	All
Actions from last meeting	Todd
Project update	Lance/Amy
Construction update	Lance
Community issues and feedback	Todd
Feedback on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR)	All
Commencement of operations - communication plans	Amy
Upcoming engagement activities	Todd
Next meeting	All

Actions from last meeting

Action: Community representatives to provide information, questions or channels for consideration as part of communication and engagement planning in the lead up to commencement of operations.

- A community representative asked for feedback from the pop-up engagement session at Sunbury Village Market on 11 December, sharing that they had been told by a couple of people that they struggled to get specific information in response to questions. Todd advised that he thought the day went well and, while there were a few people who expressed their opposition to the project and walked off, good conversations were had with most people and a genuine effort was made to answer all questions. In all the team spoke to more than 60 people.
- Todd shared that many of the people the team spoke to seemed to be of the understanding that the material from the tunnel is basically going to be dumped at the site, rather than tested and treated, with the PFAS from the water removed and taken offsite to be destroyed. He advised that following in-depth conversations about the purpose of the facility and the treatment process, a lot of people commented that they were less concerned about the potential risks. While this did not necessarily change their opposition to the facility being built in Bulla, they were appreciative of the opportunity to talk to someone and have their questions answered.
- A community representative questioned the advice that the PFAS would be removed and taken offsite, saying that it was their understanding that there will be PFAS remaining in the soil that will be put in the containment cell. They advised that Hi-Quality needs to be open and honest and provide the full

picture, noting that until the soil is treated and tested, no-one knows what levels of PFAS or other contaminants remain in the soil.

- This led to an in-depth discussion about the levels of contamination, the treatment process and what is being communicated to the community. Lance advised that the advice provided by the West Gate Tunnel Project is that the PFAS is in the water and that the facility will have multiple stages of processing to remove the PFAS. It was agreed that the concerns raised would be taken on board and addressed in future communication and engagement activities.
- Discussion then returned to the action and a community representative advised that it would be helpful if Hi-Quality was to provide visual, easy to understand social media content to explain key elements of the project. After a brief discussion to better understand the request, Amy advised that this would be considered for future communication activities.

Action: Draft Terms of Reference to be sent to participants for feedback.

- Action completed. Terms of Reference on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting.

Action: Hi-Quality to inform the community representatives of signing of the contract with the JV as early as possible.

- This action was held over as the contract is yet to be signed.

Project and construction update

- Lance advised that the Traffic Management Plan (TMP) is still going through the approvals process and that it is sitting with the Department of Transport for sign-off.
- He advised that the contract with the CPB John Holland Joint Venture (the JV) was yet to be signed, advising that there was still work to be done and that it was likely still some weeks away.
- In relation to the intersection upgrade, he advised that the works were largely complete with the pre-interim lights operational. He addressed concerns about the design of the intersection, advising that the intersection would be upgraded further as part of the Sunbury Road Upgrade, hopefully including the provision of a left-hand turning lane when exiting the site. Community representatives reiterated their concerns that the current design significantly impacts the flow of traffic and that if this was not rectified before the trucks start to arrive it will cause massive delays. Lance advised that discussions are ongoing about further upgrades to the intersection. Community representatives asked that their concerns be raised once again with the responsible authorities, with the request that the issue be rectified before commencement of operations.
- The community representatives expressed their frustration that their concerns about the intersection, Bulla Bridge and road safety are not being listened to and the lack of response from the Department of Transport and VicRoads. Hi-Quality representatives assured the group that the State Government and other project parties are listening to their concerns and that issues raised at the Community Dialogue meetings are raised and discussed on a regular basis.

- Lance advised that the poor weather has impacted construction progress, however, that the builders are on schedule to complete stage one of the containment cell this month. He advised that progress on the processing bays and pre-treatment ponds was a week or two behind schedule, however, unless there continues to be significant rain, the facility should be in a position by early March to take the first truck.

Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)

- Todd thanked those who had provided feedback prior to the meeting. In support of their feedback, one representative said that the community representatives needed to do more to get information out to people in the community.
- The main discussion centred around the need for responses to be provided to concerns raised by the community regardless of who is accountable for it, rather than being told that it is someone else's responsibility. The representatives advised that it is not good enough that Hi-Quality advises that issues are being raised with the other project parties and that the other parties need to attend Dialogue meetings and do more to engage with the community.
- There was strong agreement amongst the representatives that this expectation needs to be reflected in the TOR. Suggestions included amending the purpose of the group to specifically list the other project parties as participants and that their absence from the process be noted in the meeting notes.
- Todd advised that consideration would be given to how the expectations of the other project parties can be made clear in the TOR and that this would be discussed with other project parties.
- A couple of representatives advised that they would provide further feedback in writing following the meeting.

Community issues and feedback

- The discussion started with the acknowledgement that an update on the Sunbury Village Market pop-up had been provided and concerns around the intersection upgrade had been discussed.
- The reduction in speed limit on Bulla Bridge was then discussed. Community representatives once again shared their concerns about safety and that, despite the reduction in speed limit to 40km/hr, the bridge was not designed to deal with the numbers of large trucks that use the bridge today, noting that the likelihood of an accident happening is going to grow with the increase in number of trucks once operations commence. Once again concerns related to the width of the lanes and the bridge, the behaviour of drivers (with representatives reporting numerous examples of poor driver behaviour) and road conditions. They shared their view that the reduction in speed limit is not going to prevent more head on collisions happening and that the risks are much greater to the community with trucks full of PFAS contaminated material travelling along the route.
- There was a strong view amongst the representatives that the reduction in speed limit was an acknowledgement that Sunbury Road and Bulla Bridge are not fit to carry the truck traffic and was only made so the project could proceed.

- A representative then shared that they had obtained a copy of an engineer's assessment of Bulla Bridge through Freedom of Information (FOI) and that it raised numerous issues with the bridge including width, lack of gutters, drainage, and the need to reseal the roadway. They advised that it was their understanding that while some of the recommendations in the report had been acted on, others had been ignored. Other representatives requested a copy of the report and it was agreed it would be shared with the group.
- Hi-Quality representatives acknowledged the groups and broader community concerns about road conditions and safety, advising that the safeguards that will be put in place by the JV and the transport contractor(s) will be stringent and will make the transport as safe as possible. They advised that they had hoped that the Department of Transport and the JV would have been able to attend a Dialogue meeting as planned, however, without the Traffic Management Plan (TMP) approved and the contract with the JV yet to be signed, they had not been able to do so. It was acknowledged that this had been the case for some months.

Commencement of operations

- Amy provided an update on the communication plans for the commencement of operations including further information on the water treatment plant (including a video showing the treatment process), joint communications with the JV (including a video illustrating the process from the tunnel site to the facility and back) and additional information about trucks and transport. She advised that Hi-Quality is also exploring advertising in the Star Weekly.
- Todd advised that the engagement calendar for the next few months had been updated with the other project parties and that this included attendance at dialogue meetings, information sessions and pop ups as discussed at previous meetings. He said that all project parties are keen to do more once the TMP and contract with the JV are signed. It was acknowledged that commitments had been made to the group that key activities would take place before commencement of operations and that we are still hopeful that this will be the case.
- The representatives clearly expressed their frustration that they are told the same thing meeting after meeting, and that it is not good enough to keep saying that actions and commitments have been captured in the meeting notes and raised with the project parties. They reiterated their concerns that the trucks are going to start rolling and that the community had not heard from the other project parties or been advised how the Bulla and Sunbury communities would benefit from the project.
- This led to a question about what Hi-Quality is going to do for the community, such as community grants, environmental regeneration projects and the like. Lance advised that Hi-Quality is committed to doing its part, but needs to consider the fact that some people in the community would not welcome support from Hi-Quality given the negative sentiment towards the project. Todd advised that Hi-Quality has committed to responding to the community expectations put forward by the group at the dialogue meeting on 28 September, along with the other project parties.

Upcoming engagement activities

- Todd advised that the pop ups at Sunbury Square planned in the coming week have been delayed due to the resurgence of COVID-19 and that the situation would be reviewed at the end of January with a view to getting out in the community as soon as it was safe to do so. He reminded the group that we welcome any suggestions for activities and events that would be suitable for engagement activities.

Agreed actions

- Hi-Quality to consider how it communicates about the removal of PFAS during the treatment process to ensure that the community is aware that there may be residual PFAS and/or other contaminants in the material that is put into the containment cell.
- Hi-Quality to look at how the treatment process and other information of interest to the community can be better communicated through social media.
- Hi-Quality to again raise concerns about the design and operation of the intersection with the Department of Transport and Major Roads Projects Victoria (MRPV), asking for assurance that the issues would be rectified before trucks start arriving at the facility.
- Hi-Quality to revise the draft TOR based on the feedback and discuss the group's expectations with the other project parties.
- Community representative to share engineers report on the assessment of Bulla Bridge with the group.
- Community representatives to share feedback on the Terms of Reference.