

Community dialogue - meeting #15

Hi-Quality – Bulla Spoils Processing Facility

Meeting details

Date: 15 April 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) |
| Beth Beavan | Communications Director, WGTP, Transurban |
| Christian Dolezal | Stakeholder & Community Relations Manager - Tunnels, WGTP, CPB Contractors and John Holland Joint Venture (the JV) |
| Lance Ingrams | Regional Manager, Victoria, Hi-Quality Group |
| Tim Spawton | Environment, Planning and Sustainability Manager, WGTP, CPB Contractors and John Holland Joint Venture (the JV) |

| 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. Representatives from the project builders – CPB John Holland Joint Venture (CPBJH JV) – were invited to discuss issues with the transport of the soil from the tunnel to the facility, including recent spills. A representative of Transurban attended as an observer.

Agenda

| Item | Discussion lead |
|--|--------------------|
| Welcome and introductions | Todd |
| Project/construction update | Lance/Amy |
| Update on transport issues from the JV | Christian/Tim |
| Questions and answers | JV representatives |
| Next meeting | All |

Welcome and introductions

- The meeting commenced with the community representatives introducing themselves, explaining their interest in the project.
- Next the representatives of the JV and Transurban introduced themselves, explaining their role. Beth advised that she was attending primarily as an observer, but was happy to answer any questions relating to Transurban.

Project and construction update

- Lance and Amy shared a presentation providing an update on:
 - the operation and construction of the facility
 - recent issues
 - West Gate Tunnel Project Third Amending Deed
 - Road cleaning
 - Hi-Quality heavy haulage incident
 - the EPA improvement notice.
- Referencing the aerial picture of the facility in the presentation, Lance advised that 31 holding bays have been completed, 14 are in use, with another 6 bays to be activated in the near future. The treated material is starting to be moved into the first part of the containment cell, with the second part of the cell being completed in mid to late June.
- He advised that the treated water has started to be discharged into the holding ponds, with the water being used for works on the site, in line with Hi-Quality's EPA licence.

- Amy talked through the update on the Third Amending Deed, noting that contrary to some commentary, Bulla Spoils Facility, the entity established by Hi-Quality for the West Gate Tunnel Project, has always had full operational responsibility for the facility. There has been no change and no other project parties, including the State Government, has ever had (or intended to have) operational responsibilities.
- In relation to road cleaning, Amy advised that following the initial Memorandum of Approval (MOA) permitting Hi-Quality to enter Sunbury Road to conduct cleaning granted on 2 April, the MOA was extended to allow cleaning overnight. She confirmed that the process involving a water cart and street sweeper captures all material from the road and that it is taken back to the facility to be processed.
- A representative asked if the MOA was granted on 2 April, why was there mud and dirt on the road more than a week later? Lance advised that obtaining the correct equipment had been a challenge and that this had led to delays, however, the facility is sourcing additional contractors, and this would assist in ensuring the road is cleaned on a regular basis.
- In relation to the EPA improvement notice issued on 1 April, Hi-Quality advised that the nature of the material from the tunnel had proven to be a challenge, with the material being finer and stickier than expected. As a result, cleaning equipment and processes were being refined, including additional hoses and cannons to support the cleaning process. Hi-Quality is required to report back to the EPA in the first week of May on the measures it has taken, or will be taking, to prevent any material leaving the facility.
- A representative raised that not all the dirt on the road is being carried out of the facility and that part of the problem is that trucks are still driving through dirt on the side of the road as they exit the facility. They noted that this issue was supposed to be rectified with the introduction of a left turning lane onto Sunbury Road when the intersection was upgraded and asked when the next stage of the intersection upgrade would be completed. Lance advised that he has not been provided with a timetable for the remaining works on the intersection from Major Roads Projects Victoria (MRPV).

Update on transport issues from the JV

- Christian started by apologising on behalf of the JV for the issues that had occurred in the first month of transport, acknowledging the stress the spills had caused in the community.
- He advised that the JV was working on multiple fronts to improve the situation, including intensive work at the pivot site (where the material is transferred from the tunnel boring machines (TBMs), to holding bays and then into trucks for transport to the facility), working with the primary haulage subcontractor (Eastern Plant Hire), addressing driver behaviour and improving the response to spills.
- He advised that he and Tim were here today to explain what is being done to improve the situation, to listen to the community representatives, and to have direct conversations with the community about the challenges being faced.
- Following Christian, Tim provided a brief overview of his experience on the project and in dealing with PFAS throughout his career. He noted that he has been working on the project since it started, that the levels of PFAS found through sampling are orders of magnitude lower than defence sites he has worked on in the past, and that the PFAS treatment solution developed with Hi-Quality is leading the way in the industry.
- He then stepped through the soil handling process, advising that the soil is being tested while in the bins at the pivot site and sent to three labs for analysis. He explained that typically contaminated soil is not moved until it is tested and classified, however, the volume of the material from the TBMs is so great that it needs to be transported to the BSPF for final classification. This is allowed under project specific EPA regulations.
- He advised that he and his team have been focussed on three main areas to prevent further spills:

- actions at the pivot site
 - truck management
 - incident response.
- Starting with actions at the pivot site, he advised that a key reason for the spills is that the material is wetter than expected. To help with this, water sprays on the conveyor that carries the soil from the TBMs to the spoil storage bins have been removed to reduce the saturation of the material.
- He said that unlike other projects, such as the Metro Tunnel, they are unable to put additives (such as lime or coagulants) in the material to make it thicker (more viscous). This is because EPA regulations prevent the JV from adding anything to the material before it is classified.
- Operators of the excavators who load the material into the trucks have been briefed to identify particularly wet or sloppy material, so that it can be put through the water treatment plant at the pivot site and the driver can be advised.
- He advised that the JV would continue to conduct trials at the pivot site to explore how to make the material safer to transport.
- In relation to truck management, he advised the JV is working with Eastern Plant Hire to improve processes, this includes:
 - additional instructions and training for truck drivers on the movement of wet spoil
 - inspection of all trucks, including grain locks, load levels and consistency
 - specific instructions about navigating the Wildwood Road roundabout (location where the main spills have occurred), supported by a digital sign at the roundabout.
- He then spoke to the third area, incident response. He advised that the JV is working closely with the EPA, WorkSafe, Victoria Police and NHVR (National Heavy Duty Regulator) on spill management and incident response.
- Workshops have also been held with VicRoads, CityLink and Hi-Quality to refine and improve response times. He noted that the authorities operate under different regulations and that they are now working together to address any gaps and to respond as efficiently as possible to spills.
- He advised training for all responsible road authorities on the CPBJH Spill Response Plan has also been completed.

Questions and answers

The following questions were asked by the community representatives at the meeting and responded to by the JV. Key points of the responses have been captured below.

1. *You talked about the challenges with different authorities having different ways of responding to spills. The State Government is the overarching authority, why aren't they imposing the highest levels of service?*
 - We are working with all the relevant authorities, agency by agency, to get the fastest response and work through any gaps in the levels of response.
2. *We have been raising the need for plans to be put in place to respond to any incidents for months, including adequate training for responders, why hasn't this happened?*
 - Plans were in place, but with the first spill, the clean-up took longer than we would like. There were some issues that needed to be ironed out to coordinate the most effective response.
 - We have made significant improvements; everyone has been on a bit of a learning curve and a lot of progress has been made in reducing response times.
3. *Are the trucks transporting the soil only used for the WGTP or are they being used on other projects?*
 - There are specific requirements for the trucks, particularly given the nature of the spoil. So the trucks do have to go through a process to be able to be used for the project.
 - However, given the nature of the trucking industry and the number of other projects going on, we expect the trucks will be used for other projects.
4. *You mentioned that the EPA needed to provide special dispensation for the soil to be transported without it being categorised first. If the spills continue, and we don't know the level of contamination in the soil for 21 days, does the dispensation need to be reviewed? The community can't be waiting 21 days to find out if contaminated material has been spilled during transport.*
 - As discussed, there are limiting factors around soil sampling which means it can't be completed at the pivot site. While the timing has shortened, we don't have the option of waiting until the test results are back to transport the spoil. Once the TBMs are in operation, the safest way for them to operate is to keep going.
 - We are treating any spill as if the spoil is contaminated. We are picking up the solid material and using water trucks and sweepers to collect all the remaining material off the road, it is not being washed into the drain. If any has ended up on the side of the road, it is being dug up and transported to the facility for treatment.

5. *We understand that there has been little PFAS detected in the material to date, what are your expectations about future levels of contamination?*
 - All the testing and sampling done indicates that there are very low levels of PFAS in the spoil along the tunnel alignment. However, we are expecting that some areas along the tunnel alignment may be more contaminated than others. One indication is previous land use, with the area where the Coode Island fire took place and lots of firefighting foam was used as an example. Another example is the Bradmill Boiler House in Yarraville, which had heavy industrial use. We are likely to reach the area below the Bradmill site later this year.
6. *Does the WGTP have live GPS tracking of the trucks? Does it allow you to track speed and identify events, such as when a truck has to brake hard?*
 - Yes we do. We have developed an IT system that tells us where the TBM is and tracks the sampling from the spoil bins at the pivot site. The trucks carry a fob that allows us to track the time it takes to travel the route and checks the weight of the trucks on departure and arrival.
 - It provides us with speed and location, though not sure about specific events such as hard braking. Data from our investigation into the cause of the spills has identified that the speed entering the Wildwood Road roundabout has been an issue. More broadly, our observations when being out on Sunbury Road have shown that speed is an issue with the traffic generally.
7. *If a driver is found to have driven in an unsafe way, are they dismissed?*
 - We have had to let some drivers go following investigations into incidents. Where it has been a more minor issue, EPH has taken corrective action with the driver.
 - It's important to note that not all incidents are the result of the truck driver's behaviour, we have also seen cases where they have had to take action to avoid other drivers on the road.
8. *One of the key issues contributing to the frustration of drivers along Sunbury Road is the 40kmh speed limit. A long stretch of Sunbury Road is reduced to 40kmh when there are no obvious roadworks. Can this be reviewed?*
 - It is likely that while you may not see roadworks on the road, it is still considered a roadworks zone.
 - While this is not an issue we are responsible for, we will follow up with Winslows (the contractors building the Sunbury Road Upgrade) and let you know.
9. *Why can't you put additives in the material after you have taken the sample for testing?*
 - Under the EPA regulations it is unlawful to add or mix soil before it is classified.
10. *How full are you filling the trucks? Are they being filled up to the water line? Would it not be safer to reduce the amount you are filling up the trucks to prevent spills?*
 - While I am not convinced that reducing the amount of spoil would make a significant difference, it depends on the consistency of the soil, it is something we're looking at.

11. *The NHVR has made recommendations on better tarping to prevent spills. Will the JV follow these recommendations to protect the community, regardless of cost?*

- The tarping system used by the trucks is compliant with regulations.
- We have an obligation to do everything reasonable and practicable to prevent the spills and we will look at it if other measures aren't successful.

12. *(Question for Hi-Quality) There was a lot of dust coming from the site on the weekend, do you have dust gauges on site that record when this happens?*

- There are gauges around the site (some on neighbouring properties) that collect dust particles.
- If you can provide further information on the timing we can investigate and get back to you.

Response provided following the meeting:

The dust in the images shared on Sunday 17 April was coming from the containment cell where crews were using dump trucks to deposit construction material to develop bridging between the cell stages. Unfortunately, there were strong winds for about 20 minutes while the work was being conducted. Water trucks were used, and we reduced the travel of dump trucks during that time, but we apologise for the dust that was caused. We looked at the site and there was no dust coming from the holding bays or the West Gate Tunnel material.

Actions

- Share Hi-Quality presentation with community representatives (Hi-Quality).
- Raise community concerns about the 40kmh roadworks speed limit on Sunbury Road and inform the representatives of the response (JV).
- Follow up on concern about dust once further information is provided (Hi-Quality).