

# SUNBURY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In **December 2021** and **February 2022**, engagement was undertaken on behalf of Hi-Quality Group at the Sunbury Village Market and Sunbury Square Shopping Centre. With the first stage of construction nearing completion, and operations soon to begin, the purpose of the engagement was to better understand the community's views about the Bulla Spoil Processing Facility, respond to questions and provide information, with a focus on how Hi-Quality is addressing key areas of concern to the community.

During the pop-up held at the market and the listening posts at Sunbury Square, our team had more than 120 interactions with community members, including many in-depth conversations. While it is clear that many people we spoke to are concerned about the facility, and do not support the material from the West Gate Tunnel being brought to Bulla for processing, there is strong interest in knowing more about the facility. We found that those who took the time to ask questions, and find out more about how the material will be processed, reported feeling less concerned about the facility and appreciative of the opportunity to have their questions answered.

At the first listening post at Sunbury Square, we heard a broad range of views, from people who were not aware about the project, to people who were opposed to the transport of the soil to Bulla. Others were of the view that, if the soil had to come to the area, the new facility was well designed to manage the process and that Hi-Quality was a good operator. In contrast, once the fact that we would be at Sunbury Square was shared on Facebook, most people who approached us were opposed to the project.

## HOW WE ENGAGED



Conversations with community members



Encouraging community members to share their views via 'postcards'



Providing information including the construction fact sheet and community update.

## KEY CONCERNS



### Roads and transport

Concerns related to the transport of the material from the tunnel storage area to Bulla were most commonly raised by the community members we talked to. These concerns were often linked to the state of the road network and Bulla Bridge, the number and safe operation of trucks, the new traffic lights and speed limits, and concerns around increased traffic. People reported feeling unsafe travelling on Sunbury Road due to existing trucks and traffic and expect it is going to get worse once operations commence. Many of the concerns centred around traffic, specifically during peak hour, and safety, including mud and rocks on the road, trucks speeding, and the transport of the contaminated material. There is a strong belief that unless more is done to improve the safety around Bulla Bridge, there is likely to be a major accident.

### **Community impact**



Underlying much of what we heard were concerns about how quickly Bulla and Sunbury are changing, and the view that the western suburbs are being disproportionately impacted by the growth of greater Melbourne. People generally accept that the spoil needs to be processed somewhere, and that Hi-Quality is well placed to do it, but believe a major contaminated waste facility should be constructed well away from residential development. In our discussions, we highlighted that nearby residential developments were approved alongside the ongoing operation of the Sunbury Eco-Hub as part of the Sunbury South Precinct Structure Plan, and that buffers are in place to limit impacts on surrounding properties. There is also a growing focus on how the Bulla and Sunbury communities will benefit from the project. A common view is that as the area has to deal with the impacts of the project, particularly on the road network, then locals should also see tangible benefits, including investment in the community and positive environmental outcomes.

### **Transparency, consultation and communication**



There are ongoing concerns about the level of transparency and consultation with the community about the project. When raising these concerns, many people expressed their view that the project parties had not been open with the community. There is also frustration about the coordination of local infrastructure projects (such as the Sunbury Road Upgrade and Gap Road Level Crossing Removal), with people believing the community has not been listened to. People also raised concerns that not enough had been done to inform and engage the community around the project, with some highlighting that this had allowed misinformation about the project to have greater influence than it would otherwise. While we had some people express their opposition and walk off, most people we engaged with were interested in knowing more about the project and how the PFAS contaminated material would be managed at the facility. Almost all who took the time reported feeling less concerned about the project and appreciated the opportunity to be heard and have their questions answered.

### **Environmental impact**



While the focus of the community appears to be more on direct impacts, such as roads and transport, the potential environmental impacts continue to be a concern. Concerns around Emu Creek and the impact on wildlife, such as the platypus, were the most commonly raised environmental concerns. People are interested to know what protections are in place to protect local waterways, in particular the safeguards in place to ensure PFAS does not contaminate the creeks.

### **Future development**



With growing residential development in the area, concerns around the potential impacts of the facility on the new housing estates were common. People are concerned that new residents are not being told about the facility when buying property, or the potential for the operation to impact the quality of life in the new developments and property prices. We found that people were interested to know that Hi-Quality had been safely operating a contaminated waste facility on the site for many years. People were somewhat comforted by the fact that the PFAS would be removed from the water extracted from the soil and that the remaining material would be tested for any residual contamination before being stored safely. An understanding of the long term plans for the site to provide employment for the local community was also reassuring to some people we spoke with.



### **Australian Recycling Corporation (ARC)**

The level of concern around the operation and regulation of the nearby ARC waste management facility was evident in our discussions. While confusion between Hi-Quality's site and the Bulla Tip and Quarry (BTQ), as it was previously known, was a key issue in our initial consultation, now the main issue is the perceived lack of action on addressing community concerns around the ARC's operations. While the majority of people we spoke with understood that it is a separate facility, a shift from when we started our engagement, they are unhappy that more has not been done to address waste stockpiles visible from Sunbury Road. Ongoing concerns with the regulation of the neighbouring facility call into question the regulatory oversight of the Bulla Spoil Processing Facility.



### **Handling of PFAS**

The details of how PFAS will be transported, treated, stored and disposed of continue to be of interest to the community. With operations at the facility nearing commencement, the discussions around PFAS has shifted, with greater interest in how the contaminants will be managed on site, how the containment cell will protect the natural environment, and what will happen to the residual PFAS that will be extracted from the material from the tunnel through the treatment process.



### **Future use of site**

Questions around the future use of the Bulla Spoil Processing Facility were raised more frequently than they had been in the past, with people asking if the site would be remediated once the tunnel soil has been processed. While accepting that planning approvals for the facility related only to the West Gate Tunnel Project, there appears to be a growing concern in the community that the site will be used for other major infrastructure projects.