Community dialogue - meeting #6

Hi-Quality – Bulla Spoils Facility

Meeting details

Date: 21 July 2021, 5.00pm to 6.15pm
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

Hi-Quality

- Lance Ingrams – Regional Manager, Victoria
- Amy Watson – Partner (Forge Communications)

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- Todd Beavis - Principal (facilitator)

Transurban

- Simon Dowding, Communications Director, West Gate Tunnel Project

AECOM

- Rachael Casson, Director of International PFAS Program

Purpose

The meeting was held to provide a briefing from Transurban on the West Gate Tunnel Project and from AECOM on the Assessment of PFAS in Groundwater along the tunnel alignment.

Agenda

The key items on the agenda were presentations from Simon Dowding and Rachael Casson.

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Overview of the presentations
West Gate Tunnel Project Update, presented by Simon Dowding

- Project overview
- Project scope
- Project benefits
- Tunnelling
- Disposing of the tunnel soil
- PFAS

Assessment of PFAS in Groundwater, presented by Rachael Casson

- West Gate Tunnel Project Groundwater Data Set
- Human Health Guidelines for PFAS in groundwater
- Data review and comparison

Copies of the presentations are attached.

Key questions and answers

Following the presentations, community representatives were given the opportunity to ask questions of Simon and Rachael. The key questions raised during the discussion are captured below. Answers have been provided with input from Transurban, AECOM and CPB John Holland Joint Venture (the JV).

1. *Can we get a copy of the presentation, with a voice recording, to share on our platforms?*

Response provided by Hi-Quality: A commitment was provided to provide a copy of the presentations following the meeting and are attached. An online recorded briefing, including the two presentations, is planned in the coming weeks so that the information can be share more broadly with the community.

2. *(Referring to AECOM's presentation) Why hasn't this information been shared sooner, given that concerns about the levels of PFAS have caused so much concern in the community?*

Response provided by Transurban: We understand there has been concern in the community about this issue and now that there is a preferred site it is appropriate to provide some data. Significant technical interpretation of the data is required, which is why we asked environmental experts AECOM to prepare a report that summarises the testing of PFAS in the groundwater from the available data.

This has been presented for the public in the AECOM report available on the Project website: https://westgatetunnelproject.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/550708/AECOM-report-PFAS-assessment-in-groundwater.pdf

3. *PFAS is not the only concern, what tests have been done/reports are available for other contaminants?*

Response provided by the builder, CPB John Holland Joint Venture: Detailed soil and groundwater sampling both during the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) and construction phases have identified a range of elements along the tunnelling alignment. The results of this sampling have been comprehensively considered in the JVs Sampling Analysis and Quality Plan (SAQP) which the EPA uses to accurately provide classification for tunnelling spoil.

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4. *How will the trucks be covered to ensure the safety of the community when the material is being transported?*

Response provided by the builder, CPB John Holland Joint Venture: Transportation of contaminated material is common on all major infrastructure projects and there are strict EPA requirements when it comes to haulage of these materials. CPBJH JV is currently undertaking a tender process to award the haulage contract. The successful haulage contractor will be required to install EPA compliant coverings over the trailers transporting the tunnel soil. More information will be available once the contract is awarded.

5. *Once the material is at Hi-Quality's facility and is tested, what happens if the levels of PFAS contamination are found to be higher than Hi-Quality can manage? What is the timeline for it to be removed from the site and where will it be taken?*

Response provided by Hi-Quality: If the levels of PFAS in the material exceed the level Hi-Quality is approved to manage, the material will be removed from the facility as soon as possible and another solution will need to be found by the JV for its safe disposal. Further information will be provided with input from the JV, including a clear timeline for the removal of the contaminated material, once the contract has been finalised between Hi-Quality and the JV.

6. *Why was the tunnel alignment selected when it was known there was PFAS contamination?*

Response provided by Transurban: Contaminated soil is common on urban construction projects, especially in former industrial areas, and there are strict processes in place to protect workers and the environment. The tunnel alignment was selected following a rigorous and lengthy Environmental Effects Statement process, which included significant community consultation. The alignments were chosen to best meet the needs of road users and to minimise the disruption on the local community. The full EES is available on the West Gate Tunnel Project website: https://westgatetunnelproject.vic.gov.au/about/keytopics/planning-approvals

7. *Why was a time span of 70 years selected for assessment of exposure levels when the average lifespan is more than 80 years?*

Response provided by AECOM: This is the standard time span used for the assessment of exposure to contaminated materials. It takes into account the fact that most people do not remain in one place for their entire life. The drinking water guidelines developed for PFAS is the level which does not result in any significant risk to the health of the consumer over a lifetime of exposure.

8. *How were the location and number of the groundwater samples chosen?*

Response provided by AECOM: For projects of this type, a rigorous process is undertaken to determine the most suitable locations, depths and frequency of testing conducted at these locations. Factors considered include the location of known sources, the size of the area and potential contamination hotspots. With 201 monitoring wells (testing) locations along the tunnel alignment and multiple testing periods since 2016, this can be considered a comprehensive testing process.

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9. What is the source of the PFAS contamination along the tunnel alignment?

Response provided by AECOM: It is difficult to identify the specific source or sources of the contamination. PFAS is found in urban areas across Melbourne and could come from a range of sources. PFAS is contained in food packaging, commercial household products, industrial products (such as chrome plating and electronics manufacturing) and firefighting foams. It is commonly found in industrial areas, like those where tunnelling works will take place.

10. How do the levels of PFAS along the tunnel alignment compare to levels of PFAS found more generally in the environment/community?

Response provided by AECOM: The levels (concentrations) of PFAS detected along the alignment are extremely low, particularly when compared with other sites in Australia. Site groundwater comparison:

- West Gate Tunnel Alignment < 2 (µg/L)
- CFA Fiskville 3,320
- Tullamarine 81.9
- RAAF Base Williamtown 1,320
- Sydney Airport 2,820

(µg/L) is equivalent to 1 gram in 1,000,000 litres of water, or about 1 drop in an Olympic size swimming pool.

11. Can we get copies of the studies referred to into PFAS levels in urban catchments?

Response provided by AECOM: Links to the studies referred to in the AECOM presentation are provided below:

https://pfas.australianmap.net/
https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/pfas/
https://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/