



Community dialogue - meeting #4

Hi-Quality - West Gate Tunnel Proposal

Meeting details

Date: 29 June 2021, 5.00pm to 6.30pm

Venue: Hume Global Learning Centre - Sunbury

Attendees:

Community representatives:

- Anthony White - Controller, Sunbury SES
- Chris O'Neill - Not Toxic Soil Campaign
- Graham Williams - Sunbury Residents Association
- Heather Dodd – Local resident (joined by phone)
- Michael Osborne - Sunbury Business Association

Hi-Quality

- Lance Ingrams - Regional Manager, Victoria

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- Todd Beavis - Principal (facilitator)

Purpose

The meeting was called following the unexpected announcement that Hi-Quality's Bulla site will be the preferred site to collect, treat and dispose of the material from the tunnel boring machines on the West Gate Tunnel Project.

Importantly, the purpose of the meeting was to respond to issues raised by community representatives in relation to the community dialogue process and questions as to whether the process would continue. In particular, concerns that: they had been misled at the last meeting; our commitment to open and transparent dialogue had not been met; the summary notes do not fully reflect the discussion at the meetings; and the request that future meetings be recorded and shared.



Agenda

The key items for discussion were:

- The circumstances surrounding the announcement
- Response to concerns that Hi-Quality had not been truthful at the last meeting
- Issues raised in relation to the community dialogue process
- Upcoming engagement activities

Key points of discussion

- The first half hour of the meeting was spent discussing in detail the circumstances surrounding the announcement and the advice provided to community representatives at previous meetings about the timing and process for the announcement.
- Lance advised that Hi-Quality was not aware that the article was going to be published and that in response Transurban and Hi-Quality had to move quickly to finalise the contract and inform stakeholders as planned.
- Hi-Quality advised the group that it was always the intention that they would be contacted prior to the announcement being made and apologised that this was not the case. As soon as the contract was executed, early Thursday evening, calls were made to inform the dialogue members. It was noted by Hi-Quality that community representatives were aware of the article, before Hi-Quality.
- Hi-Quality advised that while the tender from Transurban for the build of the testing and treatment facility had been awarded, the tender from CPB John Holland Joint Venture (the JV) for the management of the spoil had yet to be awarded.
- The representatives were advised that, while baseline elements of the contract to manage the spoil were contained in the contract with Transurban, that Hi-Quality expected it would be 4 weeks at a minimum before a contract was signed with the JV. However, the point was made that this was outside of Hi-Quality's control and that it could happen earlier.
- Community representatives were very sceptical about the explanation provided, in particular, the advice that Hi-Quality did not know that the contract was close to being executed at the last meeting on 16 June, one week prior to the announcement.
- While there were many questions and concerns around the process and what had been communicated previously, the main sticking point in the discussion was that a contract of that magnitude cannot be turned around in a matter of days, therefore, Hi-Quality must have known it was close to being signed at the last meeting and either intentionally misled the group or, at least, wasn't open about the process.
- Hi-Quality reiterated that negotiations on the terms of the contract had been ongoing for many months, noting that this had been raised in previous meetings, and that there had been significant movement on terms with Transurban since the last meeting. Hi-Quality also noted that the timing of the announcement was broadly in line with the timeline provided at previous meetings.

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- Following an exhaustive conversation about the circumstances, Hi-Quality checked in with the group to see if their concerns had been adequately addressed. Noting that the dialogue would not be effective if there was not a degree of trust that all parties were operating in good faith.
- Some members of the dialogue were willing to accept the explanation, however, noted that they would have liked to have known sooner, that they're not sure they still have the full story, and that changes needed to be made to the dialogue process to rebuild trust.
- Some members of the dialogue reiterated their concerns about the process and said they still felt they had been misled. All agreed to move on.
- Representatives shared that the announcement was a major disappointment for the community, given their opposition to the project had been clear from the outset, and all the hard work that had been put into trying to get the government and project parties to listen.
- It was noted that the comment in the Herald Sun article stating there was less pushback from the Sunbury and Bulla communities was offensive and had hurt a lot of people.
- The discussion then turned to concerns about the community dialogue process, more specifically:
 - the independence of Todd's role as facilitator and note taker
 - the accuracy of the notes from previous meetings, particularly in relation to Bulla Bridge and training of the CFA and SES
 - the request for meetings to be recorded to hold Hi-Quality accountable.
- Todd responded to concerns about his involvement, advising that he was engaged by Hi-Quality and his role was to facilitate the discussions, to help all parties listen and understand each other, and to assist in finding common ground where possible. He noted that much of i.e. community's work was with local government and that he would not risk his reputation by working on a project where he did not believe the involvement of i.e. was of benefit to the community.
- The accuracy of the notes from previous meetings was discussed briefly, however given the purpose of this meeting and the fact that time was running out, this item was carried over for discussion at the next meeting.
- A brief discussion was also held about recording the meetings. Hi-Quality reiterated its position that given the purpose and format of the dialogue, a recording would not serve the purpose of providing clear and accurate information to the broader community and that greater accountability could be achieved in other ways, without potentially impacting the openness of the dialogue. No objections were raised.
- Discussion then turned to what was needed to improve the dialogue process, with the following agreed:
 - representation would be expanded, in the first instance, another invitation would be extended to the local CFA - representatives were asked to put forward suggestions for other groups
 - draft notes would be sent to the participants in the first instance for feedback before they are finalised and shared
 - once finalised, the notes would be published on the online engagement platform (<https://hiqualitysunbury.com.au/>).
- With time running out, a brief discussion was had about upcoming plans for community engagement. Hi-Quality advised that activities planned for July and August included:
 - an online information session and Q&A
 - in person activities in the community to provide information and answer questions

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- letterbox drop to all households in Sunbury and Bulla
- site tours for priority stakeholders, including representatives on the dialogue, surrounding property owners and emergency services (CFA and SES).
- Hi-Quality was asked if the Community Dialogue was established to provide evidence of community consultation to meet any regulatory or statutory requirements. Todd advised that the Dialogue was established in response to calls from the community for more consultation and to obtain input into the engagement process, as was outlined in the initial invitation.
- A request was made for a copy of the communication and engagement plan for the project. Hi-Quality advised that detailed plans were in the process of being developed now an announcement had been made and that more details would be shared at the next meeting. Consideration would also be given to how to best share the details of the plans with the community.
- Community representatives also requested the following:
 - more information about the testing done to determine the expected levels of PFAS – Hi-Quality advised that they would seek further information from Transurban and the JV and request an expert to talk to the group at a future meeting
 - confirmation of who is accountable for the spoil testing results for material delivered to Hi-Quality and for these results to be made publicly available
 - an unredacted Environmental Management Plan (EMP) – Hi-Quality advised that due to commercial sensitivities they are not in a position to release, however, if representatives are interested in specific sections, consideration would be given to providing this information
 - further advice on Hi-Quality’s role and responsibilities in the ongoing maintenance of Bulla Bridge.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 13 July as planned.