

WHAT WE'VE HEARD:



HI-QUALITY GROUP'S PROPOSAL TO TREAT AND REUSE THE SOIL FROM THE WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

Since March 2020, Hi-Quality has been engaging with stakeholders and the local community about our proposal to collect, treat and store spoil from the West Gate Tunnel project.

Hi-Quality Group is proposing to build and operate a temporary facility within our existing Sunbury Eco-Hub that will treat and safely dispose of soil excavated by the tunnel boring machines on the West Gate Tunnel Project.

This engagement has included in-depth briefings with key stakeholders such as local property owners, property developers, Traditional Owners and community groups. We have an open Q&A on our online engagement hub, a project phone line that people can call to ask questions or provide feedback, and we have conducted a community survey. You can visit www.hiqualityecohub.com.au for more information.

Now, we'd like to share what feedback we've received and how Hi-Quality has responded when concerns are raised.

WHAT WE HEARD	HI-QUALITY RESPONSE
Community impact	
Concerns were raised around the impact of the proposal on people's health and quality of life in the area. These concerns largely relate to fears around PFAS, along with the impacts of construction and operation of a major new industrial site in the area.	While the Hi-Quality team appreciates the concerns about the proposal impacting the Sunbury and Bulla communities, the detailed environmental impact reviews show the project would not leave any detrimental effects to the site or to the local community.
There are concerns that the proposal will negatively impact property values and generally impact the highly valued rural character of Sunbury and Bulla.	Analysis from the West Gate Tunnel project shows the anticipated levels of PFAS found in the spoil is extremely low and the proposal involves a purpose-built treatment plant to remove the PFAS. Hi-Quality owns the Sunbury Eco-Hub land and has a long-term commitment to leaving a positive legacy on the local community. Hi-Quality Group will provide regular community updates to inform residents about PFAS and how Hi-Quality will manage any associated risks.

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Roads & Transport	
<p>The local road network is considered congested and unsafe, and there are significant concerns that additional traffic generated by the proposal will make things worse.</p> <p>Concerns include the proposed route, increase in truck movements, safe transport of contaminated soil and the safety and cleanliness of local roads more generally. Sunbury Road and Bulla Bridge are of particular concern.</p>	<p>To improve safety, traffic lights will be installed at the entrance to the site and the planned speed reduction on Sunbury Road to 80km an hour will be introduced.</p> <p>All trucks that transport spoil from West Gate Tunnel Project worksites are fully covered so that no dust or spoil is dropped along transport routes to the waste management facility. More information on the transport can be found at https://westgatetunnelproject.vic.gov.au/construction/soil-management/fact-sheet.</p> <p>Hi-Quality has put a number of on-site measures in place to make sure trucks are clean when leaving the site, including installing a wheel-wash and sealing 1 kilometre of roads within the site.</p> <p>It is likely that trucks will not travel during peak periods to help manage traffic.</p> <p>Hi-Quality continues to support and advocate for VicRoads' Bulla Bypass solution.</p>
Environmental impact	
<p>Potential impacts on the natural environment, particularly concerns about PFAS contamination of groundwater and waterways, are of major concern.</p> <p>Stakeholders and the community are seeking reassurance, from independent sources, that the local environment will not be put at risk by the proposal.</p>	<p>Hi-Quality has undertaken detailed environmental impact reviews which show storage and reuse will not leave any unacceptable detrimental environmental legacy, either on site or to the local community.</p> <p>Hi-Quality will use specially constructed spoil containment bays, made of high-strength material and leach-proof lining to control seepage to the underlying groundwater.</p> <p>An Environment Management Plan has been designed to manage environmental impacts by monitoring and inspecting the program in accordance with relevant environmental legislation. This includes regular testing on Emu Creek both upstream and downstream, in accordance with EPA verification and approval, to ensure that no leaching occurs.</p>

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Handling of PFAS	
<p>The details of how PFAS would be transported, treated, stored and disposed of are of major interest to the community.</p> <p>Given concerns raised in the media and on social media, many in the community are doubtful that PFAS can be handled safely and would prefer the contaminated material was treated elsewhere.</p>	<p>Hi-Quality understands community concerns in relation to PFAS, however, based on tests done to date, the anticipated levels of PFAS in the material from the tunnel boring machines are extremely low. Despite this, the proposal Hi-Quality has put forward accounts for higher levels of PFAS to prepare for any scenario.</p> <p>The Sunbury Eco Hub has a strong track record of taking contaminated and non-contaminated waste, including PFAS, since 2003.</p> <p>Hi-Quality's proposal includes the collection, assessment, and treatment of the tunnel boring machine spoil. The facilities have been designed with the highest levels of protections at every stage. The water will be drained from the spoil and treated at a purpose-built water treatment plant, resulting in water within the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, and the soil will be classified and either held as landfill on site or reused.</p>
Impacts on future development	
<p>Many of the people we engaged struggled to understand how a proposal of this nature could be considered given the increase in residential development in the area. An understanding that Hi-Quality has been safely treating contaminated materials at the site for more than 10 years went some way to addressing these concerns.</p> <p>Local property owners and residential developers are concerned about the impact on property values and their ability to sell their land.</p>	<p>Hi-Quality owns approximately 1000 acres of land at the Sunbury Eco-Hub. The landholding includes wide boundaries made up of bushland. The site is largely surrounded by other farms and bushland.</p> <p>It is approximately five kilometres from the Sunbury town centre and more than two kilometres from the nearest existing residential community.</p> <p>We have held detailed briefings with local property developers to ensure they are aware of our plans and have had an opportunity to ask questions.</p> <p>Hi-Quality has played a key role in the development planning for the area, with the knowledge that the site will continue operating until at least 2046.</p>

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Transparency and engagement	
<p>The need for transparency and the engagement process are also common concerns raised, particularly via online channels.</p> <p>There is a clear view that more needs to be done by all parties, including the State Government and the West Gate Tunnel Project, to inform the community about the proposal, provide independent evidence and respond to community concerns.</p> <p>There continues to be a strong view that consultation with the community and other stakeholders to give them a say in the decision should be undertaken for a project of this importance.</p>	<p>Hi-Quality has provided several opportunities for residents and businesses to speak with Hi-Quality Group and learn more about the proposal and provide feedback. This has included distributing flyers to properties in the surrounding area, advertising in the local paper, briefing local businesses and community groups and online engagement, and speaking directly with community members.</p> <p>We are committed to providing accurate information to the community to address any concerns or confusion.</p> <p>As Hi-Quality is in the middle of a tender process, our proposal and supporting technical reports are not public documents at this stage.</p> <p>Site tours will be offered to stakeholders once restrictions on social gatherings due to COVID-19 are further eased.</p>

We would like to hear your thoughts on the project. You can get in touch via the project phone line (03 9021 0678) or via hiqualityecohub.com.au.