

EPA APPROVAL OF HI-QUALITY GROUP'S ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN: FAQ AND INFORMATION SHEET



In March 2021, Hi-Quality Group received EPA approval on our resubmitted Environmental Management Plan. This plan was developed under the new regulations for the management and disposal of the soil excavated by the tunnel boring machines used on the West Gate Tunnel Project.

Hi-Quality Group was invited by the EPA to resubmit its Environmental Management Plan in December 2020 after all tenderers' EMP approvals were revoked by the EPA.

Hi-Quality Group developed its Environmental Management Plan with a commitment to upholding the highest environmental standards.

While this is an important step in the process, Hi-Quality Group requires approval from the Minister for Planning of its Planning Scheme Amendment application, and the competitive tender process run by CPB John Holland for the contract is still underway.

Hi-Quality welcomes questions and feedback. You can get in touch via www.hiqualityecohub.com.au.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does the EMP approval mean Hi-Quality Group will be awarded the contract?

While it is an important step in the process, the EPA is not responsible for contracting decisions in relation to the West Gate Tunnel Project. The EPA's approval simply means that Hi-Quality's proposal meets the rigorous standards required of its Environmental Management Plan. The competitive tender for the contract to treat and safely dispose of the spoil from the Project is still underway.

What do the Environmental Protection (Management of Tunnel Boring Machine Spoil) Regulations 2020 entail?

In June 2020, the Victorian Government created new regulations tailored for the management and disposal of tunnel boring machine spoil. These outline the standards and requirements that contractors must meet in safely managing the spoil. You can find out more at the EPA's website at <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/laws>.

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<p>Why were these regulations introduced?</p>	<p>Hi-Quality does not have a role in developing EPA regulations. You can find out more about the regulations including Environmental Management Plan requirements at the EPA website at https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/laws.</p>
<p>Why was Hi-Quality's initial EMP revoked?</p>	<p>In December 2020, the EPA reviewed its decision to approve Environmental Management Plans submitted by the three parties bidding for the contract to manage the spoil from the West Gate Tunnel Project. This review resulted in the EPA rescinding its decision to approve the EMPs, hence requiring resubmission and reapproval with further information required to be submitted.</p>
<p>What has changed in the updated EMP?</p>	<p>As Hi-Quality Group had already submitted and been given approval on the information required, Hi-Quality was able to resubmit its EMP with the further information required by the EPA.</p> <p>Hi-Quality made some incremental changes to its plans, including adjustments to the design of the facility and minor technical elements.</p> <p>We are confident in the quality of our submission and that our plans uphold the highest environmental standards.</p>
<p>Why was the EMP redacted, and can we see a full version of the report?</p>	<p>The EMP includes detailed technical information that is unique to Hi-Quality's tender submission and which is commercially sensitive. While the competitive tender process is ongoing, the confidentiality of this information must be protected. The EPA's assessment considered Hi-Quality's EMP in its entirety.</p>
<p>What was taken out of the complete EMP?</p>	<p>The redactions include commercially sensitive information, including technical details and figures and financial information. Some detail on our proposed water treatment facility has also been removed as this purpose-built facility has been designed by Hi-Quality Group drawing from proven technologies and global best practices. It is intended to elevate the standard of water treatment in Australia therefore includes highly sensitive information. Should Hi-Quality be chosen as the preferred site, we will provide further detail on this water treatment facility to ensure the public understands the approach that will be taken on site.</p>

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<p>There has been concern around the effectiveness of the regulations. Can the community be sure the EPA is acting in our best interest with these regulations?</p>	<p>Our approval means that Hi-Quality's proposal meets the rigorous standards required of its Environmental Management Plan. We operate with full EPA oversight, and will continue to be monitored closely should we be chosen as the preferred tenderer for the West Gate Tunnel spoil. Hi-Quality Group is not involved in the development of any EPA Victoria regulations. You can find out more about the regulations at https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/laws.</p>
<p>There are cases of poorly managed sites in the Sunbury & Bulla area. Do they also fall under these new regulations?</p>	<p>We cannot speak on behalf of other operators. Hi-Quality Group has operated safely in the Sunbury area since 2003, and we are recognised as a reliable, premium facility for the management of various types of waste. Should we be chosen as the preferred site for the West Gate Tunnel spoil, this will not change.</p>
<p>Is the EMP part of the suite of documents reviewed by Hume City Council in the 20(5)?</p>	<p>Between August and September 2020, Hume City Council reviewed all documentation provided by Hi-Quality to the Minister for Planning under Section 20(5) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Our Environmental Management Plan submitted to the EPA is a separate process, and EPA Victoria is responsible for the approvals. Hume City Council will be able to review the publicly available Environmental Management Plan. Hi-Quality is not privy to any additional conversations between EPA and Hume City Council.</p> <p>Hi-Quality briefed a number of Hume City Council officers on our proposal in April 2020, and we have made several offers to update Officers and Councillors since then. We remain available to Council for briefings at their discretion.</p>
<p>The EMP confirms that noise, traffic, and road cleanliness are all issues that may result from this proposal. If that is the case, why is Hi-Quality still moving forward with the proposal?</p>	<p>Hi-Quality Group has undertaken a formal community engagement process during which we gathered detailed community feedback on our proposal. We have heard the community's concerns and have made several plans and recommendations to minimise these impacts wherever possible. This includes installing a signalised entrance to the Hi-Quality site, installing mandatory wheel washing at the entrance and exit of the site for all incoming and outgoing trucks, and conducting ongoing noise monitoring procedures.</p> <p>Our plans are also guided by the findings from robust technical assessments of noise, traffic, environment, fire, and cultural and heritage.</p> <p>Our feedback and engagement mechanisms remain open and we encourage anyone with questions to reach out at hiqualityecohub.com.au. You can also read the full report from our community engagement process at the website.</p>

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<p>Long-term effects of PFAS are currently unknown, and these regulations allow companies to destroy reports after two years. How can residents of Sunbury and Bulla be confident that we won't feel the impact of this proposal for generations to come?</p>	<p>While Hi-Quality has no involvement in the development of any EPA Victoria law or regulations, we are committed to being a responsible and sustainable operator and undertake our own stringent reporting and recording of all site operations.</p> <p>As private owners of the site, we are personally committed to leaving a positive legacy. We are identified as a growth area in the Sunbury South Precinct plan, which will provide jobs and economic opportunities, as well as parks and recreational spaces, for generations to come.</p>
<p>The approved EMP references potential future uses for the facility, however Hi-Quality has previously said it is only intended for temporary use. What are the plans for this facility?</p>	<p>Hi-Quality Group's proposed planning approval will expire in April 2024 and only relates to the West Gate Tunnel Project needs. For any future uses of the project, Hi-Quality would be required to submit additional applications tailored for the additional proposed use.</p> <p>Hi-Quality is currently focused on the immediate approval process for the West Gate Tunnel Project and has no current plans for further use of the facility.</p>
<p>The new regulations stipulate that the nearest sensitive receptor can be 200m away, a reduction from the 500m outlined in previous regulations. How far away is the closest sensitive receptor to the Hi-Quality site?</p>	<p>The Hi-Quality owned property encapsulates 570 – 650 Sunbury Road, which includes a minimum boundary from the proposed facility and current operations.</p> <p>The closest residential dwelling is 300 metres south of the proposed facility, while the closest school is over 2300 metres away.</p>
<p>The EMP states there will be some removal of native vegetation, and as private owners you won't need approvals to do so. How much flora and fauna are you planning to remove?</p>	<p>Hi-Quality makes every effort to preserve and protect native flora and fauna on our site and has implemented several mechanisms to minimise adverse impacts wherever possible, including providing alternative vehicle access, parking, and equipment laydown.</p> <p>As private owners of the site, we are personally committed to leaving a positive legacy, and restoration of vegetation and the development of parks, eco-parks and the ongoing preservation of local creeks is part of our long-term plan for the site.</p>
<p>When will all the documents be available for public scrutiny?</p>	<p>As this is a competitive tender process, technical reports are not currently public documents. The relevant authorities may make these available when a preferred site is awarded the contract. The EMP will be publicly available soon after approval, save for some commercially sensitive redactions.</p>

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<p>How can Hi-Quality develop on top of contaminated land cells?</p>	<p>Hi-Quality is identified as a growth area in the Sunbury South Precinct plan, providing jobs and economic opportunities, as well as parks and recreational spaces for generations to come. These plans have been developed with local and state authorities and take into consideration the materials we process at the site.</p>
<p>What will happen to the treated water?</p>	<p>Once it is tested, the water will be drained off and treated through a water treatment plant at the Sunbury Eco-Hub site, resulting in water that is within Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. The water will then be reused on-site or disposed of to a licensed facility. Further detail on the water treatment process will be made available once a preferred site has been chosen for the project.</p>
<p>Emu Creek is linked to the Maribyrnong River and, as such, contamination from Hi-Quality could have far-reaching impacts. How is Hi-Quality proposing to mitigate this risk?</p>	<p>Our assessments show that Emu Creek will not be adversely impacted by Hi-Quality's operations. Indeed, the water from the West Gate Tunnel Project after treatment is expected to be within Australian Drinking Water Guideline levels.</p> <p>We have outlined recommended monitoring for Emu Creek for any discharge from the treated groundwater, including baseline trigger levels and heightened mitigation procedures in the unlikely event that these levels are exceeded. We have taken a conservative and preventative approach to all water management and will remain vigilant in monitoring for any adverse impact.</p>
<p>What are the next steps on the tender?</p>	<p>The competitive tender for the contract is still underway. Hi-Quality still requires planning approvals from the Victorian Government, and a decision on the preferred contractor for the spoil disposal by CPB John Holland, who are running the tender process.</p>