

BCRG COMMUNITY FORUM 4/2010

MEETING NOTES

Date: 15 September 2010

Time: 6:00 for 6:30 – 9:30pm

Where: Brooklyn Community Centre, Cypress Avenue Brooklyn

AGENDA

Chair: Jen Lilburn

Meeting Purpose:

- To provide an update on progress towards resolution of dust, noise and odour issues

6:00	Light Refreshments
6:30	1. Welcome Apologies Confirm meeting purpose and agenda Confirm draft meeting notes – Nov 09, Feb 10 and May 10
6:45	2. What is BCRG? Has it achieved anything? (Jen Lilburn)
7:05	3. Update on the resolution of dust, noise and odour issues Update on the dust monitoring program (EPA Victoria: Richard Marks, Manager Pollution Response Paul Torre, Scientist, and Lyn Denison, Principal Scientist, Environmental Strategies) Includes questions/discussions
7:45	Break
8:10	4. Impacts of dust: a metropolitan perspective (Dr Simon Słota-Kan, Public Health Physician & GP, Environmental Health, Department of Health) Includes questions/discussions
8:45	5. Brooklyn: Where to from here (Stephen Sully, General Manager City Development, Brimbank CC) Includes questions/discussion
9:10	6. Little Wins What are some of the short-term things that can be done that would make a difference?
9:30	Close

Please note that the notes from this meeting will be posted on EPA Victoria's website and will be available to the general public. Meeting participants should advise Jen Lilburn if they would like their name removed from this public document.

Item 1. Welcome

Jen Lilburn welcomed all attendees and noted a number of apologies (see attendance record). An outline of the agenda was provided, confirming the opportunities to ask questions following each of the presentations.

The draft notes from the July meeting were endorsed as correct.

Item 2. What is BCRG? Has it achieved anything?

Jen Lilburn indicated that she had been facilitating BCRG meetings for two years, beginning with the community workshop held at Williamstown in August 2008. She described the noise, dust and odour issues that are still evident, as described by residents and workers in the area at every meeting since.

Jen indicated that, as a kind of stocktake had asked representatives from BRAG and Yarraville On The Nose what they felt BCRG had achieved over this time. Their responses are summarised in Attachment 1.

Jen indicated that one of the challenging aspects of convening BCRG is the fact that new participants continually join the forum. While they are always welcome, newcomers generally lack knowledge about BCRG and what has been said and done before. For this reason, Jen distributed a booklet providing some background and other information about BCRG.

Gilbert Martin, of Brooklyn Ratepayers Committee, suggested that the booklet should also recognise the work that this committee had done in the local community.

Note by Jen: References to Brooklyn Ratepayers Committee were inserted in a slightly updated version of the booklet, which was distributed by email as part of BCRG Update 33/2010 on 28/9/10.

Item 3. Update on the resolution of dust, noise and odour issues Update on the dust monitoring program

Richard Marks (Manager Pollution Response, EPA) stressed the importance of the odour, noise and dust issues to the EPA and of the BCRG in highlighting those issues. Richard's slide presentation (attachment 2) provided an outline of current compliance and enforcement actions being pursued against offending industries in the area. It was noted that the EPA had recorded a recent increase in odour and that 4-5 major odour producers had been identified in the area. Licences of offending industries are currently being reviewed.

Recent rains have highlighted the carriage of mud onto roads as a significant source of dust. Richard gave details about an enforcement operation involving Vic Roads, Maribyrnong CC and EPA Victoria to monitor transportation of mud onto Paramount Road. This involved road cleaning and subsequent observation of activities to identify which vehicles are causing the mud/dust issues. Pollution Abatement Notices (PANs) will be issued to businesses identified as significant contributors to this problem.

Richard advised that details of the notices issued would be made available in the meeting minutes.

Note by Jen: EPA advised on 29/9/10 that the process of issuing PANs is continuing. A number of companies have been issued with 55(3D) notices to identify occupiers; this is required before PANs are issued. Responses have been received and once the PANs are issued the companies will be identified.

In addition, work is continuing with Vic Roads to progress road improvements, but funding to seal roads is still a problem.

Question/Discussion Session

- 1 Regarding enforceable undertaking proposed for Cargill: Why can't money raised through fines be channelled back into the community?

Fining offending industry through the legal system is just one method being used to manage problems and it can take a long time. The EPA is also looking for improvements in a shorter timeframe by working with industry to gain cooperation in reducing emissions. Resolution of the problems is regarded as a better outcome than imposing penalties only. If offending industries do not show genuine intention to effect improvements, then the EPA will and has pursued these industries through the courts.

Concern was raised about recent odour events allegedly arising from Australian Tallow Producers. James Elton advised that ATP's biofilters are working well, but other problems had caused recent odour issues. EPA acknowledged that there are still problems and ongoing complaints and they continue to work with Australian Tallow Producers to gain greater improvements. Residents expressed that they are sick of the problems which are ongoing.

Cr Michael Clarke referred to the abovementioned Paramount Rd operation, which jointly involves EPA, Vic Roads and Council. This combined effort has demonstrated that flouting the law is not acceptable and will result in action.

2 *Is there a way to have companies be in contempt of court if they repeat offend?*

Breaches are taken seriously and the EPA needs to be satisfied that companies are genuine in implementing improvements. The meeting was assured that if improvements are not implemented, escalation of enforcement is pursued by the EPA.

3 *Companies are still not complying with permit conditions, but Council issues Certificates of Occupancy anyway. Why is Council doing this?*

Cr Clarke (Maribyrnong CC) responded that this is a historical problem as industry has existed for many years. If industry has a 'prior use' right they have an entitlement to operate.

Statement by community member: These problems are occurring with new operations too.

Response by Cr Clarke: "Prior Use" is a complicated issue. The new industry may be different, but there might be a history of that type of industry in that location.

Statement by community member: Brimbank Council is taking these issues seriously, but Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong need to take a more proactive role.

4 *The School has a pollution response interim policy. Is the data on the EPA web page usable to determine whether the school actions its responses?*

The school is using the hourly updated air quality data on the EPA website to guide its policy.

5 *What is the court process? Is there a quicker option?*

The EPA confirmed that offending industries are dealt with in the Magistrates court. Unfortunately the EPA cannot affect the court timeframes.

Statement by community member: Offenders are getting away with poor operations for far too long.

6 *How can Australian Tallow make application for a new venture when it can't comply with its existing conditions?*

Carey Patterson (Brimbank CC) advised that the Australian Tallow application is awaiting further details requested by the responsible authority. If and when this is provided, it will be evaluated. As with any planning application, the proposal will then be subject of community consultation.

7 *Is there a dedicated local EPA officer who can quickly respond to complaints?*

The EPA works on a proactive and responsive basis. While there is no office in the west, EPA is in the area most days and monitors peak time operations. Some officers live locally, but officers are not employed on the basis of where they live. Investigations occur at varying times of the day.

8 *Where does the frequent burning smell, which is the subject of many complaints, come from?*

Residents suggested that Hansons asphalt processing is a possible source; the EPA will follow this up.

Paul Torre (Air Quality Scientist, EPA) gave a presentation and provided explanations on dust monitoring results (also part of attachment 2). Results were tabled for coarser particles (PM10) and finer particles (PM2.5). The data showed that the national air quality objectives were exceeded in the Brooklyn area at PM10, but not at PM2.5. The data also showed a strong correlation between high wind conditions and exceedences. The meeting was informed that the School monitoring station will be closed, but samples will be collected from a monitoring station at the Brooklyn Reserve.

Question/Discussion Session

9 *Is there an intrinsically bad air quality element or is the size of particle more relevant?*

Paul responded that both are relevant.

10 *When was the monitoring station first installed at the school site?*

October 2009. The school monitoring station will be replaced by the bigger Molab 1 Station at the Brooklyn reserve, which is not as constrained by available space.

11 *When an 'air quality alert' is reported on the news, what are they reporting?*

This is a general air quality measure, essentially reporting on smog.

12 *How quickly can information on air quality be accessed by the public?*

Information is provided every day on the EPA website. Paul provided clarification that ambient air quality is a different process from the monitoring being undertaken in the Brooklyn area, which is more detailed and measures specific elements which would not normally be measured.

13 *Has there been any more thought about putting a monitoring station at Altona Gate?*

Monitoring sites are positioned in the most suitable and representative areas, and within resource constraints.

Next steps: Results from the monitoring will be analysed by the CSIRO to try to identify and trace sources. 12 months of data is required for reliable results.

Lyn Denison (Principal Scientist, Environmental Strategies, EPA) spoke briefly to the meeting describing her position as being involved in policy work and interpreting data with regard to health effects. Lyn reported that no asbestos or arsenic has been detected in samples to date and that some samples were indicative of soil. To date, levels of contaminants are within international standards, but she stressed that it is early days in the analysis process and that more data is required. Regular updates of results will be provided to BCRG as they become available.

Question/Discussion Session

14 *Were samples taken on high wind days?*

The focus has been on obtaining representative samples, not necessarily on days of high wind.

15 *It is known that employees at abattoirs are vaccinated against Q-Fever. Have there been any reports of cases of Q-Fever outside of employees?*

See also response to Q25.

16 *When was the last comprehensive analysis done?*

This was undertaken as part of a larger project in 2004. Lyn will provide contact details in the minutes.

Note by Jen: After the meeting, Lyn advised that an air quality study was undertaken of 4 capital cities, including Melbourne (focussing on Footscray and Alphington). The results of the "Four Cities Study" are available from Khokan.bagchi@dewha.gov.au.

The Study is referred to in a 2006 EPA publication that can be found at www.epa.vic.gov.au/publications . Look up [Review of air quality monitoring data near roads](#) in the alphabetical listing.

Item 4. Impacts of dust: a metropolitan perspective

Dr Simon Slota-Kan (Public Health Physician and GP, Environmental Health, Dept of Health), supported by Julie Hoy, presented on a number of health impacts on Victorian communities caused by airborne particles (attachment 3). The data has been collected across the state from varying age groups. It was stressed that there is no known level of safety and that it is recognised that airborne contaminants do impact on health. Dr Slota-Kan indicated that the Dept of Health is very supportive of the efforts undertaken by EPA and local Councils to reduce dust sources.

Question/Discussion Session

17 *The problem with the results averaged by Local Government Area (LGA) is that some localities straddle municipal boundaries and therefore the results may be diluted.*

Dr Slota-Kan agreed with the statement and added that the overall results do not cause alarm, but nor are they reassuring. The data is based on the individual's place of residence recorded as they were admitted to hospital, not on the hospital attended.

18 *How can conclusions be drawn from hospital admissions when some people just put up with symptoms and don't go to hospital?*

This is a problem with the data presented, particularly where access to hospitals is difficult, for example in rural areas of Victoria.

19 *If the data has been collected from hospital admissions, are full address details available?*

Not often due to issues of privacy. Postcode information is used and it may be possible to drill down further using this information.

20 *People may experience sinus or eye problems which do not require hospital admission, but they may go to the doctor – is this information included?*

If a person is not hospitalised, they would not be captured in this data.

21 *Does foul ongoing stench have a direct effect on a person's health?*

No direct health effect can be demonstrated, but it is recognised that such exposure can make you feel sick. In addition, continuous exposure to smell can result in stress, leading to other health issues.

Statement by participant: The aim is to keep people out of hospital – preventative measures are important. The smaller the airborne particles, the deeper the penetration into the lungs. There are many studies available worldwide making the connection between long term exposure and health impacts. The message should be 'any improvement to air quality will result in better conditions for people'.

The EPA repeated that the results so far showed exceedences occurred in the coarser particles PM10, not in the finer particles PM2.5, but assured the meeting that every effort is being made to pursue improvements.

22 *Why not confine emissions within site boundaries?*

The EPA confirmed that their aim is to identify where dust is coming from and to stop it at its source. Community reps reiterated the importance of placing monitors on the boundaries of dust-producing industries.

23 Are there any studies available on employee health within the industries in this area?

The Health Dept is not aware of these, but WorkCover may have some information. The Health Department will follow up on this.

Note by Jen: After the meeting, Dept of Health provided the following:

WorkSafe Victoria are notified about occupational health effects in relation to individuals and certain specified substances or conditions. They do not have systems in place to undertake general health surveillance or studies, and do not hold information about specific geographical areas or industries other than claims data that maybe categorised into industry and illness type.

The reports to WorkSafe Victoria are defined in the legislation and are usually required when:

- *a certain regulated level is exceeded;*
- *the health of a person is affected and*
- *action is required.*

In addition, some large industrial sites will undertake OH&S surveillance and monitoring programs of their employees. Unless they breach a known regulated level condition, they do not report the results of these studies to WorkSafe Victoria.

24 Local Government Area comparisons water down the results. Shouldn't we compare Brooklyn with another suburb which does not have industry?

The aim is to achieve consistency with comparisons and there is no proposal to break studies down into smaller areas. Health effects are recognised, so the aim is to remove pollutants.

25 Should residents in close proximity to abattoirs be vaccinated against Q-Fever?

Information is available on the Health Dept website, but this information will be provided to BCRG.

Note by Jen: After the meeting, Dept of Health provided the following:

Is there a risk of Q Fever in the Community?

Q fever is a notifiable infectious disease under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 and is caused by rickettsia Coxiella burnetii. The disease is normally associated with workers in the livestock industry. The organism is commonly found in the tissues and fluids of infected animals. The dusts around stock facilities are also sources of infection as the organism is resilient and can survive in dry environments. The Environment Protection Authority specifies a 500 metre buffer to the nearest residential zone for an abattoir. This buffer, along with best practice in waste and dust management, provides protection to persons outside the abattoir.

Employee immunisation programs are one of a number of recommended activities to protect workers.

Since the start of 2009 till present, 37 cases of Q fever have been notified in the state of Victoria. Of these, 6 have been notified in the North and Western Metropolitan Region, with 3 out of the 6 living in the cities of Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Brimbank. Each case is followed up by the Department of Health (DH) to identify where the cases worked, where they live and whether they have identifiable exposures. The DH also link known exposures, so cases arising in the vicinity of the abattoir in Brooklyn would be identifiable. The recent cases were identified as an abattoir worker, a sewerage worker and a person who had close contact with a sheep.

Although contaminated dust particles may occasionally be carried downwind for considerable distances, the risk to communities in and around Brooklyn of contracting Q fever from local abattoirs would be minimal based on previous notifications. However, individuals experiencing flu like symptoms such as fever, chills and sweats and who are concerned about possible exposure to Q fever, should seek medical advice.

Item 5. Brooklyn: Where to from here

What will the Brooklyn Industrial Precinct look like in the future?

Stephen Sully (General Manager City Development, Brimbank CC) discussed a strategy to identify the future for the Brooklyn Industrial Precinct. The community will be involved in developing this strategy through representation on a strategic group, and through broader discussion at future BCRG meetings.

In addition,

- Council is looking at opportunities for funding to construct problem roads, but in the interim, dust suppression works will be carried out to reduce dust issues.
- Western region councils are working on future solutions for handling green waste currently being processed by SITA.

A representative from SITA clarified that new operating conditions have been in place since July, including the fact that green waste is being now processed at another site to the north of Melbourne. Residents should hopefully have noticed improvements.

Question/Discussion Session

26 *Isn't it better to manage the few offending industries that do not comply with operating conditions?*

The Council is taking steps to systematically enforce conditions in partnership with the EPA.

27 *Is anything earmarked for the Huntsman site?*

No (as far as Stephen is aware).

28 *If existing controls are not met (eg. Smells from the fish processing plant) how are they allowed to continue operating?*

Council is responsible for ensuring industry complies with zone provisions and permit conditions. If a company does this, then it has a right to operate.

29 *What is the timing of construction of Bunting Road?*

This has not yet been established.

30 *Is there already a strategy for the future of the Brooklyn area, or is Council starting from scratch?*

The proposed strategy outlined is new.

Item 6. 'Little Wins'

Residents were asked to note small actions that can be quickly done that would make a difference to their community/environment and would give BCRG confidence that things are moving in the right direction. The responses are provided in attachment 4, and will be passed on to the relevant organisations for a response.

Laurie Bell brought a sample recently removed from his roof gutters in a plastic container to demonstrate the dirt the community puts up with on an ongoing basis.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Notes taken by Margot Harrison and reviewed by Jennifer Lilburn. Presenters were given the opportunity to review the notes relating to their item to ensure the discussion was accurately recorded. Additional comments received after the meeting have been highlighted as such.

Next BCRG Community Forum: 17 November 2010.

Meeting Attendance Record – 15 September 2010

57 people registered their attendance:

Alan Bloomfield	City Circle Demolitions	Julie Hoy	Department of Health
Angela Brown		Karen Nolan	On The Nose
Anne Palmer	Hobsons Bay Residents Association	Kelly Kwan	Local employer
Bert Boere	BRAG	Laurie Bell	BRAG/Brooklyn Ratepayers Committee
Bill Cole	Resident	Llewellyn Rees	Resident
Brian Long	BRAG	Lyn Denison	EPA Victoria
Bruce	Resident	Malcolm Ramsay	Hobsons Bay City Council
Bruce Light	On The Nose	Marcus Gibson	Fulton Hogan
Candice Lu		Margot Harrison	Notes taker
Carey Patterson	Brimbank City Council	Marie Long	BRAG
Carmen Largaioli	BRAG	Mark Freeman	Annunciation Brooklyn
Charlene Gatt	Star News Group	Mark Globan	Sita
Chris Roberts	Resident	Meredith Sussex AM	Brimbank City Council
Dorothea Johnson	Annunciation Brooklyn	Michael Clarke (Cr)	Maribyrnong City Council
Foti Beratis	Maribyrnong City Council	Nick Morgan	Cargill
Geoffrey Ricardo		Paul Ratajczyk	EPA Victoria
Gerard Mulcahy	Sims Metal Management	Paul Torre	EPA Victoria
Gilbert Martin	Brooklyn Ratepayers Committee	Peter Curl	Fulton Hogan
Heather Humphreys	Brooklyn Resident	Richard Marks	EPA Victoria
Herb Horrell	Brimbank City Council	Robert Hague	Resident
James Elton	Australian Tallow Producers	Rory Bracken	Fulton Hogan
James Fraser	On The Nose	Sandy Firman	Resident
Jan Cole	Resident	Simon Slota-Kan	Department of Health
Jason Boyle	One Steel	Stephen Sully	Brimbank City Council
Jen Lilburn	BCRG Chair	Sue O'Halloran	CMI Forge
Jo-Anne Williamson	Altona North Resident	Tom Buxton	Sunshine Groupe
John Merritt	EPA Victoria	Tony Briffa (Cr)	Hobsons Bay City Council
John Rowe	Local employer	Troy White	Swift Australia
John Styzinski	Brooklyn Resident		

Apologies			
Cath Williams	Yooralla	Melissa Campbell	Resident
Geoff Mitchelmore	Altona North Resident	Cr Michael Raffoul	Hobsons Bay City Council
John Whittam	Dept of Health	Noel Ryan	Huntsman Chemicals
Kerry Murphy	EPA Victoria	Sheila Cabral-Sheppard	TPI/TWM Landfills
Lowen Clarke	Resident	Cr Tony Briffa	Hobsons Bay City Council
Matt Vincent	EPA Victoria	Wade Noonan MP	Member for Williamstown