

Orica Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project

Community Newsletter

Update from the Community Liaison Committee Meeting Issue 13, February 2004

This newsletter

This newsletter is distributed throughout the suburbs neighbouring Orica's Botany site to share with the residents the key issues that have been raised at the Community Liaison Committee meetings. Orica prepares it on behalf of the committee following each meeting.

Community Liaison Committee Meeting

The committee last met on 16 December 2003 at the Botany Town Hall. Discussion centred on Orica's Groundwater Plan, monitoring of residential bores and communication with the local community.

The Environment Protection Authority's comments on Orica's Cleanup Plan

At the committee meeting, EPA's Manager for Contaminated Sites, Niall Johnston gave a presentation on the EPA's assessment of Orica's Plan.

Time lines:

Niall acknowledged the need for a staged approach to the cleanup, with both short and long term goals. He said that the EPA would issue Orica with a second Notice confirming time lines and targets. He also said that the EPA do, however, recognise that some aspects of the timing are beyond both Orica's and their control (e.g. the time taken to get planning approval for the projects).

Hydraulic containment (pumping and treating) vs passive approaches:

Orica has proposed several approaches to cleaning up the groundwater. These include pumping and treating, as well as less intrusive methods, such as bioremediation (helping the natural bacteria in the soil to treat the chemicals at a faster rate than would occur without help).

The EPA considers hydraulic containment of the groundwater as an essential first step. They require it in the primary containment area. (Block 2 of Orica Southlands, between McPherson Street, Springvale and Floodvale Drains). The USEPA has been consulted and agrees with this approach. Once hydraulic containment is underway, Orica can turn its attention to the less intrusive approaches.

Orica's presentation on the Cleanup Plan

Orica's Technical Manager James Fairweather gave a presentation on the Cleanup Plan at the committee meeting. Whilst Orica is waiting for the EPA's formal response to the Plan, more than 20 projects have been identified and work has begun on several of them.

The proposed Groundwater Treatment Plant (for decontaminating water extracted from the ground) will be similar to a chemical plant. Due to its significance, it will probably require an Environmental Impact Statement. Planning approval and the long lead times on equipment delivery will affect the start up for work on the plant, however steps are already being taken to get these processes under way.

While plans for the plant are formed and approved, other approaches to treat the groundwater will be used. These include:

- **Recommissioning of Orica's steam stripping unit**
The unit was shut down in 1998 as it was not required at that time. Orica is currently assessing its condition. If it can be converted, if emission standards can be met, and if all planning approvals are granted, it will be used to treat approximately 300,000 L/day of groundwater.
- **Off-site disposal trial through Waste Services NSW Liquid Treatment Plant**
Orica will initially send 20,000 L/day (one tanker load) to the plant at Lidcombe as a trial. If the Lidcombe Plant proves able to treat the groundwater effectively, and has the capacity, then Orica would like to send 100,000 L/day until the steam stripping unit is recommissioned.
- **Bioremediation**
Trials to test the effectiveness of bioremediation have begun. Initial results should be available by June 2004. Orica proposes to write up further results by October 2004.

Residential Bores

During the meeting Orica's Site Environment Manager Bruce Gotting gave a presentation on the sampling of residential bores.

It seems that there are many unlicensed bores in the area. **Residents are strongly encouraged to have their bores registered with the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR).** (DIPNR commented at the meeting that no one would be prosecuted.) 72 owners of unlicensed bores had come forward already.

No contamination from Orica was detected in any of the residential bores recently sampled. Orica will continue to monitor the groundwater movement and re-sample as necessary.

Joan Staples of *Save Botany Beach* said that some residents are concerned bores might be contaminated by non-Orica compounds. They are concerned that if this is the case, the problem might not be addressed. The EPA's Niall Johnston said that the EPA is legally obliged to respond to information about contamination. They will investigate the issue, ensure effective management and work with DIPNR to resolve it.

Communication

Orica's Community Relations Manager for the Groundwater Project, Barbara Campany gave the committee an update on the work undertaken since the last meeting. Barbara had spoken to individual members of the committee to gather their thoughts on how better to communicate the project details to the community.

At the meeting Barbara tabled a Draft Terms of Reference and Draft Communication Guidelines for the committee. The Terms of Reference and Communication Guidelines have been designed to provide a clearer outline of members' roles and responsibilities with an aim to improve the communication process.

Several new communication initiatives are being implemented to help improve current community awareness. These include:

- The development of a dedicated website, which will include back copies of this newsletter, relevant site and location maps, a potted history of the site, and fact sheets regarding specific aspects of the project.

Information will continue to be uploaded to the website as the project evolves. A "frequently asked questions" section will also be developed and a process for questions to be registered on line will support this.

- The website is expected to be launched by mid March 2004 and the URL address will be advised at the next committee meeting.
- Distribution of technical documents through local libraries for better public access. (A copy of the current version of Orica's Botany Groundwater Cleanup Plan is available for public access in Botany Council's branch libraries at Mascot and Pagewood);
- Introduction of regular updates through a column in the *Southern Courier*, (the first of which was published on 17 February 2004); and
- Development of processes that provide more personal communication with local neighbours to the site. These include telephone updates, face to face meetings and opportunities for site tours.

The next Community Liaison Committee meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9 March 2004. It will include a tour of the Bioremediation Field Trials at Orica Southlands.

Contact Orica

Orica is committed to communicating with the local community. If you have any comments, criticism or guidance on how Orica can improve communication, or any queries about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Orica by:

- Calling the community hotline on 1800 025 138
- Emailing Orica's Site Environment Manager Bruce Gotting on Bruce.Gotting@orica.com, or
- Writing to:
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