



Community Newsletter

BOTANY GROUNDWATER CLEANUP PROJECT

www.oricabotanygroundwater.com

Update from Community Liaison Committee

Issue 17 • February 2005

Welcome to the 17th edition of the Community Newsletter for the Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project. This Newsletter provides an overview of Orica's Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project activities during the last four months as well as an update from the Community Liaison Committee (CLC).

This edition of the Newsletter features a report on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Groundwater Treatment Plant (GTP) and its operations that was prepared by our environmental consultants, URS Australia Pty Ltd. The EIS was submitted by Orica to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) in November 2004. This Newsletter also provides some highlights from the December meeting of the CLC, and a report on the most recent round of residential bore monitoring.

Communicating with you, our community

Orica continues to encourage community involvement in our consultation efforts, so we can hear your concerns, questions and ideas. One way we try to do this

is regularly updating you on the Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project through a variety of communication channels.

We have, and will continue to publish regular columns in the *Southern Courier* newspaper. We have also published a range of comprehensive Fact Sheets, available on our website, which are designed to provide the community with simple and easy-to-understand information on the environmental science and technology involved in this project.

Our website, www.oricabotanygroundwater.com, provides you with access to an unprecedented amount of the Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project technical documents, a full version of the EIS and a comprehensive record of our *Southern Courier* columns, Fact Sheets and presentations at public meetings.

Distribution

This newsletter is distributed throughout the suburbs neighbouring Orica's Botany site, including Banksmeadow, Botany, East Botany, Pagewood, Hillsdale and Matraville.

Environmental Impact Statement on the Groundwater Treatment Plant and operations

Highlights from Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting – 8 December 2004

Residential Bore Monitoring

Environmental Impact Statement on the Groundwater Treatment Plant and operations

The major milestone for the Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project since our last newsletter was the submission of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Groundwater Treatment Plant (GTP) and its operations to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) in mid November 2004.

The EIS included a review of alternative methods for treating the groundwater, as well as a detailed examination of the impacts of important issues such as air quality, potential risks to human health, potential hazards and the impact on water quality and the aquifer. A range of other environmental impacts of the GTP were also comprehensively assessed. The EIS concluded that the proposed

treatment plant and its operations were justified on the basis of their “environmental acceptability”. It found that the proposal met the objectives of the Botany Groundwater Cleanup Project, including the need to minimise the impact on the environment and community.

Following its submission, the EIS was placed on public exhibition from 16 November to 17 December 2004. During the exhibition period, Orica was committed to engaging as many members of the community as possible. An EIS overview was distributed to 25,000 households in the surrounding district; displays were held at 19 locations and seven information sessions were conducted, many of which were attended by expert authors of various EIS chapters.



Even though the EIS has concluded that the GTP is justified and that its associated risks are negligible, we know that many people have genuine concerns about how the GTP will affect them and their community.

We made our best efforts to balance the opportunities for the community to provide meaningful input into the development and exhibition of the EIS proposal with the need to move rapidly to ensure that the GTP will be fully operational before the high concentrations of contaminants in the groundwater pass the Foreshore Road containment line.

To try and mitigate some of these concerns, Orica will fund an independent technical monitoring panel, which would have access to all monitoring data for independent verification during the operation of the GTP. Orica has already held preliminary discussions with the Community Liaison Committee about this panel and should be able to report back soon.

Orica is also considering options for restoring some of the amenity that has been lost by many local residents because of the contaminated groundwater. We hope to bring you more details about this proposal shortly.

BREAKING NEWS!

The Department of Environment and Conservation announced the determination of the GTP on 11 February at a special meeting of the CLC.

Orica is pleased to receive this determination as it gives us the go-ahead, within strict licence conditions, to proceed with the GTP. We are now well on the way to achieving our goal of stopping the high concentrations of contaminated groundwater reaching Botany Bay.

We plan to have the GTP operating by October 2005. While the GTP is being constructed, the Steam Stripping Unit (SSU) will continue to operate. The SSU is working well and is currently containing and treating up to 800kL of the contaminated groundwater per day.

Highlights from Community Liaison Committee (CLC) Meeting – 8 December 2004

The CLC meeting held at the Botany Town Hall on 8 December 2004 was very well attended, with 45 participants from the local community, local and state government, industry and several non-government organisations.

Joe Woodward and Niall Johnston from the DEC provided an overview of significant milestones in the Botany Groundwater Project to date:

- They stressed that DEC's focus has been on protecting the community and Botany Bay.
- The first stage of the DEC Notice of Clean Up Action (NCUA), which was for Orica to intercept the leading edge of the plume, has been achieved. The second stage, to treat the groundwater using the GTP still has to go through an extensive approvals process.
- Groundwater is already being treated at the Steam Stripping Unit (SSU) on the Botany Industrial Park. The SSU has limited capacity and this is therefore only an interim measure. The contaminants are being stored for future destruction.
- The Voluntary Remediation Agreement between the EPA and Orica expired on 31 December 2004. It will not be

renewed, but will be replaced with a Remediation Order.

Bruce Gotting the Botany Site Environment Manager for Orica provided a status report on the Project;

Voluntary Remediation Agreement (VRA):

- The most recent bioremediation field trials have shown promising results, breaking down increasing amounts of chlorinated hydrocarbons in each of the trial areas.
- Orica expects to complete the draft Human Health Risk Assessment for review by DEC, NSW Health, and an independent peer reviewer (Professor Brian Priestly, Director of the Australian Centre for Human Health Risk Assessment) by the end of February 2005.

Primary Containment Area Projects:

- The modelling for the hydraulic containment is now complete.
- The transfer pipeline to the SSU is completed and now operational.
- The SSU has been recommissioned and two columns are operating, treating about 800 kL/day. Third

column construction is underway and is due to be completed by March 2005. It should increase the capacity by another 1000 kL/day. The expected total SSU treatment capacity is 2000 kL/day.

- If approvals are received, construction of the GTP will start in February 2005 and is expected to be operational by October 2005.

Secondary Containment Area (Foresore Road) Projects:

- Most of the wells have been installed on Foresore Road median strip.
- Transfer pipelines from selected wells in the Secondary Containment Area to the primary pipeline have been constructed.
- The interim containment and treatment at the SSU is expected to contain enough of the contaminants at the Secondary Containment Area until the GTP is operational.

Dense Non-Aqueous Phase Liquid (DNAPL) Source Area Investigations

- The August 2004 DNAPL report found that DNAPL is located in several places on Southlands and the Botany Industrial Park.
- Further investigations are underway.

We are now well on the way to achieving our goal.



Orica's Community Relations Manager, Barbara Campy provided a review of the community relations activities in recent months:

- Approximately 150 people attended four community workshops, which were held to hear residents' concerns about the proposed GTP and to provide information on the proposal to help allay those concerns.
- All questions and answers raised in those workshops have been sent to workshop participants and included in the EIS on the proposal.
- An overview of the EIS was sent to 25,000 households in the surrounding area.
- During the exhibition period, the EIS was displayed at various locations and a series of information sessions were held.

Copies of the presentations made to the CLC are available on our website: www.oricabotanygroundwater.com

The next CLC meeting will be held on 8 March 2005.

Residential Bore Monitoring

Our round of residential bore monitoring from 3-6 November 2004 showed mixed results. 23 bores were sampled, six for the first time. Most bores URS tested showed no contamination. We did, however, find some low levels of contamination in four bores, including one in Collins Street – just to the north west of the Botany Industrial Park and outside of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources' Groundwater Extraction Exclusion Area, but within the Groundwater Embargo Area.

Although the levels of contamination were very low, the detection north west of the site was of concern to us and to the community. Many residents were concerned that the contamination had spread further than we had told them and were worried that their bores were affected.

Contamination had been detected in this general area in earlier groundwater investigations. It is not yet clear, though, how the contamination came to be found in an area cross-gradient from the Orica source areas. It is thought that it could have 'dragged' there by historic high-volume pumping of groundwater by previous industrial users, or it could be from another source.

Because of this, Orica extended the testing area north west of the site and outside of the Groundwater Extraction Exclusion Area. URS tested a further 11 bores in December 2004 in the area bounded by Myrtle Street, Jasmine Street, William Street, Swinbourne Street, Stephen Road, Spring Street, Collins Street, Holloway Street and Wentworth Avenue. Six of the 11 bores returned positive results and further investigations are being undertaken to understand the source of this contamination.

For more information:

- Call our Community Feedback Line on 1800 025 138
- Visit our website at www.oricabotanygroundwater.com
- Write to us at Community Matters,
16-20 Beauchamp Road, Matraville, 2036.