

MEETING NOTES (APPROVED 11/06/2015)

Thursday, 12 March 2015 at 5:30pm	Chaired By: Gareth Jones
Club Central Menai – Allison Crescent, Menai	Note Taker: Gareth Jones

ATTENDEES

SITA Australia

- (PC) – Sydney Landfills Manager
- (PH) – Sydney Resource Recovery Manager
- (KR) – Landfill Manager
- (AP) – Compliance Officer
- (GJ) – Stakeholder Engagement Manager
- (ED) – Consultant (GHD)

Community Groups

- (LH) – Menai Wildflower Group
- (GH) – Cronulla Model Aero Club
- (WK) – Sutherland PCYC

Residents

- (JR) – Menai
- (IK) – Como
- (NG) – Illawong
- (DE) – Illawong
- (CE) – Illawong

Apologies

- (JoR) – Menai
- (GP) – Barden Ridge
- (GM) – ANSTO
- (MG) – Menai
- (NR) – SITA

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

1. WELCOME AND AGENDA

Item	Discussion	Action	By
1.1	GJ welcomed all in attendance. All present introduced themselves.		

2. ACCEPTANCE OF NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Item	Discussion	Action	By
2.1	Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted with the following amendments: Item 4.6 GH noted that in the fourth paragraph, rather than ‘...as a directive from Sutherland Shire Council...’ this phrase should read ‘...as a directive to Sutherland Shire Council...’. Notes to be corrected accordingly. Item 4.17 GH noted that during this part of the meeting it had been highlighted by a member that the definition of ‘litter’ required clarification. Notes to be changed to include this point. Item 7.2		

GH noted that the comment attributed to him had been made by another member. Notes to be changed from 'GH related that...' to read 'A member related that...'

3. OPERATIONS & ENVIRONMENT UPDATES

Item	Discussion	Action	By
3.1	<i>New Illawarra Rd Landfill</i>		
3.1.1	<p><i>KR presented the Operations Update included with these notes in Appendix 1.</i></p> <p>KR also reported that a couple of recent power station outages had occurred, during which time gas was flared rather than being used to power the engines. Also advised that there was a new corporate requirement to display statistics at the front gate identifying the current capacity and breakdown different waste.</p>		
3.1.2	<p>LH reported that 3,000 plants were currently available for donation to local schools and community groups from Menai Wildflower Group's on-site Native Seedling Nursery at SITA's Lucas Heights facility. It was noted that the nursery is always looking for volunteers.</p>		
3.1.3	<p><i>AP presented the Environment Updated included with these notes in Appendix 1.</i></p>		
3.1.4	<p>DE reported that she had noticed an odour at the Menai Rd/New Illawarra Rd traffic lights at 9:45am on Monday 9 March, but did not report this to SITA's Environmental Feedback Hotline.</p>		
3.1.5	<p>JR asked what additional measures are put in place during the odourous period from March to August indicated on the odour complaints graph.</p> <p>AP replied that during this time of the year additional odour patrols are conducted, and the size of the tip face is kept to a minimum. A new deodoriser chemical is also currently being trialled, along with a new system for covering the waste on the tip face. Gas collection infrastructure has also been recently inspected.</p> <p>KR added that new gas wells would soon be installed, which would improve gas capture rates and further reduce potential for odour. Any issues that arise are being rectified as soon as possible.</p> <p>DE added that increased odour was a problem every winter, with atmospheric effects keeping odour close to the ground.</p> <p>JR added that this also affects Engadine and Woronora heights.</p>		
3.1.6	<p>JR said that she had noticed in the site's Environmental Management Plans that the landfill EMP referred to 'no odour,' while the ORRF EMP referred to 'minimising' odour. Why can't 'no odour' apply to organics?</p> <p>KR replied that the EMPs available from the Department of Planning & Environment website, to which JR was referring, were still in draft form.</p>		

PC added that garden organics are odourous even before the point of collection. SITA's process is aimed at collecting and managing the impact of those odours to the best possible extent.

JR acknowledged that the situation has improved since SITA took over, but is not happy with the existing odour situation if it is expected to continue until 2037.

KR added that SITA were 'not just putting [their] hands in [their] pockets' –significant capital investment had been committed towards improving the site's environmental performance. Issues that may have been overlooked by previous management are now being addressed as soon as possible.

3.1.7 GH asked what other information about complaints is recorded.

GJ replied that SITA's complaint management system stores information regarding the location of the observation and the subjective strength rating (which can vary greatly between individuals), and that AP's investigations involve analysis of the wind strength and direction at the time of the odour observation.

KR added that SITA staff try to get out to the location of the observation immediately. Complaint reports are received instantly on completion of each call, enabling fast response. All complaints are reported by SITA to the EPA, even if false names or contact details are given by the caller.

3.1.8 DE asked if a map of the gas wells, dust monitors and groundwater bores could be provided.

AP explained that the locations of the groundwater bores don't correlate to odour.

KR added that there were over 550 gas wells currently in operation across the site, and approximately another 130 which were not currently operational.

KR explained that the gas flow and composition is monitored on each well, and individual wells showing unsuitable gas composition are turned down or switched off from time to time in order to maintain a constant fuel mix for the engines. Low methane levels can reduce the efficiency and affect the operation of the engines. Gas wells can also stop functioning for various other reasons including atmospheric pressure, physical collapse, blockage etc. Some are dual wells, which collect both leachate and gas. Having offline gas wells does not equate to any negative impact on the overall performance of the gas field.

3.1.9 AP demonstrated the locations of the groundwater bores on a large aerial photograph.

Note: Due to potential security and vandalism concerns, the exact locations of the groundwater monitoring wells, many of which are outside the site boundaries, cannot be disclosed to the general public. The map presented at the meeting is available to CRG members but will not be publicised more broadly or included as an appendix to meeting notes.

3.1.10 GH reported that he observes odour near the site every Sunday, but doesn't report it, as it is not common public knowledge which number

to call to report odours. GH suggested that SITA approach neighbouring community groups to assess their odour observations and increase awareness of feedback hotline.

SITA representatives and other members pointed out that the odour hotline is advertised on roadside signage along New Illawarra Rd.

3.2 *Lucas Heights Organic Resource Recovery Facility (ORRF)*

3.2.1 PH reported that summer is the peak period for garden organics, with grass growing quickly etc, and that this would slowly taper off over the next few months. As previously mentioned however, the peak odour season is now beginning due to weather impacts. SITA's focus is now on trying to get material in, keep it moving and maintain aerobic composting conditions in order to control and minimise odour. Safety toolbox meetings are being held every week, and regular odour patrols are being conducted. Several EPA visits have occurred recently, focusing on licence requirements, and had found no major issues. SITA are working closely with the EPA, who are happy with the operation of the site.

IK asked if the EPA conduct scheduled visits or unannounced checks.

PH replied that they do both, and that this happens at all similar sites around Sydney, not just SITA's Lucas Heights ORRF.

3.2.2 GH asked for the locations of the dust gauges to be added to AP's map for the next meeting.

Action	<i>Add the locations of dust gauges to the aerial photograph currently displaying groundwater monitoring wells.</i>	AP	Next meeting
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4. DEVELOPMENTS UPDATE

Item	Discussion	Action	By
4.1	<p>PC reported that a significant amount of community engagement activity had taken place over recent months. The key topics discussed were traffic, odour and litter. All identified local community groups had been contacted and offered a meeting with SITA to discuss the proposal and any concerns and receive answers to any questions they may have.</p> <p>PC provided an update on the progress of the development timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) had been submitted in late November, at which point SITA immediately announced the proposal to the community and invited feedback. The SEARs had been issued in February and are publicly available on the Department of Planning & Environment (DPE) website. Over December, January and February, SITA have been continuing to prepare the technical studies that support the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which are now being finalised by GHD. 		

- All EIS documentation and studies will next need to be approved by Sutherland Shire Council as the joint applicant for the development, and also by ANSTO as the landholder of two-thirds of the site. SITA is currently engaging with both of these parties.
- When agreement is received with Council and ANSTO, the Development Application (DA) and EIS will be submitted to the DPE. DPE will then conduct an initial assessment to review and ensure all requirements had been covered in the EIS, or address any other identified issues.
- DPE will then announce a public consultation period (45-60 days) for the community to respond to the EIS documents. That exhibition period is a regulatory requirement – SITA commenced with a process of additional voluntary consultation in late November 2014.
- The DA and EIS are expected to be submitted in late April, with the regulatory exhibition period commencing in May. Depending on the DPE review and engagement with the community, the decision will be made at DPE's timing (outside SITA control).
- As members are aware, the Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA), Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) between SITA and Sutherland Shire Council, and Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) were all made publicly available very early in the development planning process. All of these documents, in updated form, will form part of the EIS documentation. The DPE will take into account the DA, EIS, VPA and EMPs.

4.2 JR said that while she couldn't make it to the previous meeting, she wants to have her great disappointment with SITA placed on record. JR feels 'hoodwinked' that SITA had told journalists and Council about the proposal before they told the CRG. JR feels that this is very poor practice, and like SITA was just 'ticking a box' in telling the CRG.

DE added that she felt that this was out of character for SITA, as they normally let the community know in advance of any developments.

PC said SITA will take these comments on board. The intention was to inform people of what was going on as early as possible. The process of seeking approval for the project still has not even started, as the DA still has not yet been submitted. The process of discussion and engagement with the community, DPE etc. is still continuing. Nothing will be triggered to create the project until the DA is submitted.

JR repeated her feeling that the CRG should have been informed earlier.

GH said that when the DA goes on public exhibition, there will be a lot of public comment against it, and not enough engagement has happened to date. There had been very little attendance at SITA's community information sessions. GH feels that SITA are only applying 'spin,' and noted that operating the CRG is a ministerial requirement.

The CRG should not be seen therefore simply as a gesture of good will, undertaken as a SITA initiative.

A CRG member noted that the newspaper coverage of SITA's proposal had been very noticeable.

4.3 GH reported that he had suggested an extraordinary meeting be held to discuss the SEARs following their release on 3 February, but that SITA had declined this request.

GJ explained that this had been declined due to the fact that the next regular meeting would be taking place very soon, and calling an extraordinary meeting would require members to attend at very short notice with no real benefit in moving the meeting earlier.

JR commented that SITA had called members to an extraordinary meeting at short notice to announce the proposal in late November.

4.4 DE asked if the \$100m community development contribution had been provided to Sutherland Shire Council yet, noting that she had recently observed road resurfacing works taking place near her home.

PC replied that this would not happen until after approval is given. The next step in the process is submission of the DA, and until consent is granted no further progress could occur. PC added that the money can only be spent on community service projects rather than routine maintenance.

JR noted that the schedule of community development contribution payments is outlined in the VPA.

4.5 NG commented that it would be good if someone from council could attend CRG meetings.

GJ replied that council representatives are always invited to CRG meetings, but on this occasion had not been able to attend.

4.6 GH reiterated that in the closing statements of the last meeting, he had stated that local community groups weren't averse to the project, but not at the expense of the community. Such groups are always willing to discuss proposals like these in a collaborative manner, and Cronulla Model Aero Club (CMAC) want to work with SITA as part of the CRG. GH does not believe this engagement process has been particularly effective.

4.7 KR noted that SITA had mentioned in previous meetings that some options for development of the site were being considered, including an advanced resource recovery technology (ARRT) facility, which had already received approval previously under WSN. There had been several conversations about an ARRT in previous meetings.

JR said she remembered those conversations but thought the idea had been taken off the table.

KR added that ANSTO had later withdrawn permission to use the land originally proposed for construction of the AWT.

4.8 GH said he felt there was no guarantee that ANSTO wouldn't decide to use the land currently proposed for parkland, preventing the parkland from being developed.

WK commented that this stage of the process is a good opportunity for the community to lobby for that to be part of the DA – this is where the CRG can contribute effectively in that manner.

4.9 JR said that the important issue was that the CRG and community had never heard anything about an extension to 2037. As a result, the surrounding areas have been significantly developed over recent years.

PC noted that as of today, based on the current consent conditions, the site will close in 2025.

JR said she had no doubt that the development would be approved, since there were no other practical options for disposal of the waste.

4.10 GH said he had been surprised that in a previous meeting SITA had said they were unaware of the Woodward report, given that the Woodward report is extensively referenced throughout SITA's own submission documents.

4.11 JR reported that she had received positive feedback from other members of the community for writing a letter to the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader. Members of the community had told her that they were not happy with SITA's engagement or the proposal, and felt that Lucas Heights will become the destination for the whole city's rubbish. The community are angry that the proposal is underway, and raised litter issues along Alfords Point Rd and Heathcote Rd, asking why SITA aren't picking it up. Community members had also raised concerns about odour and traffic. JR does not doubt that the technology used in the ARRT would be state-of-the-art, however the proposal 'came out of the blue.' The community feels that they have been tricked, and don't want the landfill's lifespan to be extended. Council's distribution of SITA's community development contribution also needs to be discussed with Council separately.

4.12 IK said that considering Council is a joint applicant and the local representative body, it was disappointing that Council had not consulted with the community before negotiating the VPA.

4.13 GH said he would like to see all community issues put on the table and worked through properly. The issue is how SITA's monetary contribution to Sutherland Shire Council would benefit local people in Menai who will have to put up with the ongoing impacts of the landfill. CMAC for example are in need of a longterm site and amenities. GH sees SITA's contribution to the Council as a way of satisfying the Council rather than properly addressing the issues at hand.

4.14 DE noted that when the Bangor Bypass was constructed, the RTA paid for the installation of air conditioning for local residents who would be adversely affected by traffic noise.

4.15 JR said that there were many community groups in the area who were in need of funding and support. JR just wants to make sure that the broader community receives a good deal.

GH agreed that he thinks this is what the CRG is about. Money doesn't solve everything. Many groups in shire don't have appropriate space, and even with millions of dollars would not be able to buy a block of land big enough for their activities. Engagement is about consultation and collaboration, not just 'spin.' SITA should work with the community,

not against them, otherwise a barrage of opposition to the development will go from the rest of community directly to the government.

PC asked what processes GH would recommend to improve SITA's level of community engagement.

JR suggested SITA hold a stall at the local community markets or in shopping centres to be more visible.

NG suggested SITA attend local railway stations in the mornings to hand out information about the proposal.

GH said that rather than asking people to come to a consultation, SITA should try to be in the places that people are already visiting.

PC said that he accepted these points of view, but at the same time SITA had been working hard to ensure the information was widely broadcast. The proposal was featured on the front page of the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader, which most people should see, and also advertised through letterbox drops to 11,000 households. The four Community Information Sessions, and the six scheduled community facility tours, were also advertised in the Leader. All of this however is only part of the engagement process – not the entire process – and there was more to come.

NG said she suspected people might wait until the DA was lodged before saying anything.

JR agreed and added that people are concerned but reluctant to say anything, as they feel that the community is 'stuck with it.'

GH said that many present at the meeting had been part of process for many years, and that the right people were in the room to avoid the discussion becoming an adversarial situation.

5. LUCAS HEIGHTS I UPDATE

Item	Discussion	Action	By
5.1	<i>No representatives from Sutherland Shire Council were present to provide an update on the Lucas Heights 1 / Barden Ridge site.</i>		

6. ACTIONS OUTSTANDING

Item	Discussion	Action	By			
6.1	From 11 December meeting:					
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>4.2</td> <td><i>Provide map of monitoring points and wells to GH via email, and include same map with future Environmental Updates.</i></td> <td>AP</td> </tr> </table>	4.2	<i>Provide map of monitoring points and wells to GH via email, and include same map with future Environmental Updates.</i>	AP		
4.2	<i>Provide map of monitoring points and wells to GH via email, and include same map with future Environmental Updates.</i>	AP				

This action was addressed in Item 3.1.9.

ACTION CLOSED.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Item	Discussion	Action	By
7.1	GJ advised that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 11 June at Club Central Menai, followed by a meeting on Thursday 10 September at SITA's Lucas Heights facility, which would include a tour.		
7.2	<p>DE asked if a litter collection could be conducted along Alford's Point Rd.</p> <p>WK suggested 'work for the dole' programs might be able to do this.</p> <p>DE asked if this could be done on a regular basis.</p> <p>WK replied that such an activity would be up to Council.</p> <p>DE noted that WSN used to send litter collection crews out every month. More rubbish on roads leads to other degradation of local aesthetics.</p> <p>PC replied that SITA's responsibility in litter collection is limited to the site's immediate boundaries. These are roads controlled and maintained by Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) and as such are not even Sutherland Shire Council's responsibility. PC said he had seen crews doing litter collections recently. The State Government now have \$20m available for litter control programs, and a similar amount to combat illegal dumping.</p> <p>KR added that he communicates regularly with RMS, Council and the EPA regarding illegal dumping in the vicinity of site. The EPA recently introduced higher penalties, and have a new litter reporting app.</p> <p>WK said dumping and litter were similar issues in that if they were not cleaned up quickly, other people would dump/litter in the same place. WK has never seen Heathcote Rd as bad as it is now.</p> <p>DE said she was more concerned about litter being blown out of trucks travelling to the tip.</p> <p>JR said that while it might not be SITA's responsibility, the community sees it as SITA's responsibility.</p> <p>GH noted a recent ABC radio comment that increasing tip fees are the reason for increased dumping.</p> <p>PC noted that when the State Government are allocating \$20m to address litter issues, they are recognising that it is not just a local issue. Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) was also announced last month, which is another sign that litter is recognised as being a statewide problem.</p> <p>PC added that there is a perceived correlation between illegal dumping and the location of landfills, but in reality illegal dumping occurs all over the city, not just near landfills.</p> <p>WK noted that the Australian Federal Police (AFP) had been doing a lot of patrols to catch dumpers on ANSTO property.</p> <p>DE said she always used to report illegal dumping in the past and this did keep the problem under control to some extent.</p>		

GH suggested that fines and surveillance need to be increased, and said he would like to know when litter and dumping patrols took place and how many people were being prosecuted.

DE asked if SITA still conduct litter patrols.

PC replied that KR and AP drive around local roads every day and note any environmental issues, with any dumping reported to Council.

KR added that just before Christmas a customer with a load of garden organics didn't want to pay the disposal fee. Another customer followed them out of the site and observed them dumping the load on a nearby road. Unfortunately the dumper could not be prosecuted, but was given a strong warning by the EPA. Recently the Highway Patrol had also followed a vehicle in with an insecure load and issued a \$1200 fine. SITA often reports dumping to EPA, RMS and Council.

DE said she had seen paper being blown out of trucks with canvas covers.

JR noted that Sutherland Shire residents receive two free garden organics drop-offs every year.

7.3 WK said he had heard that a proposal was put through for an off-leash dog area near the PCYC site, and pointed out that dogs and motorbikes do not mix. On 3 out of every 4 Sundays, 30-60 riders can be on the PCYC endurance and skills training track at any time. There would need to be a significant buffer zone.

PC replied that a location within the Barden Ridge complex had been proposed for the off-leash dog area, rather than near the PCYC site.

MEETING CLOSED 7:15 PM

Next meeting: Thursday 11 June 2015, 5:00pm – Club Central Menai (Allison Crescent, Menai)

ACTIONS OUTSTANDING

Item	Issue	Action	By
3.2.2	Add the locations of dust gauges to the aerial photograph currently displaying groundwater monitoring wells.	AP	Next meeting

Appendices 1) Operations & Environment Update presented by AP & KR.