



COMMUNITY INFORMATION – PROJECT UPDATE

## BROOKLYN INDUSTRIAL AREA: IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

July 2009

This fact sheet provides updates on progress of activities to reduce noise, dust and odour from the Brooklyn area industries.

### MATT VINCENT, SENIOR MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, EPA

While EPA has been involved in improving industry environmental performance in Brooklyn for many years now, the regular odour, noise and dust reports by local residents continues to be a concern for the EPA.

The EPA Brooklyn project team continue to actively monitor emissions, respond to community reports of pollution and meet with industry managers to implement better environmental solutions.

EPA will continue to pursue solutions with industries to make a real difference to the livability of Brooklyn and surrounds and I am committed to ensuring that EPA takes decisive action to address where progress is not being made.

### ABOUT THE BROOKLYN INDUSTRIAL AREA

Since the establishment of Melbourne, the western suburbs have housed industry alongside residents. Well serviced by roads, rail and port, the area continues to be an important industrial hub today.

Air and water quality in the area has been a community concern as far back as the 1870's. Brick making, quarrying, fat boiling, meat canning and candle making were common industries and the Maribyrnong River was used as a sewer for untreated industry waste.

While industry may have improved, the environmental health and livability of western suburbs still remains a concern for residents.

### ABOUT THE BROOKLYN INDUSTRY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

For many years local residents have been informing authorities about the effects of industry emissions on the local community. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) together with local government, are working with local industry to improve environmental

practice and ensure that industry operate within conditions of their licence.

Work with industries and residents across the three local government areas of Hobsons Bay, Brimbank, and Maribyrnong is underway. This covers the suburbs of Altona North, Brooklyn, Sunshine West, Sunshine, Braybrook, Tottenham, West Footscray, Kingsville, Seddon, Yarraville, Spotswood and South Kingsville.

The Improvement Program involves 3 key elements:

1. **Building better industry practice** - EPA Victoria and local government working with industries to improve emission compliance and practice;
2. **Involve and educate the community** - a community reference group and other forms of community engagement provide opportunities for resident feedback and building understanding between industry and residents; and
3. **Monitoring and enforcement of emissions compliance** - an important function of EPA and local government is to monitor emissions and ensure industry compliance with regulations.

### INDUSTRY AND RESIDENTS CO-EXISTING

Odour, noise and dust in Brooklyn are not simple issues to address. Emissions arise from a variety of sources, vary in intensity and are affected by weather conditions.

Industries are regulated to produce minimum emissions. EPA and local councils have different powers to regulate these issues and can only prosecute industries when they are in breach of their licence conditions.

In modern town planning, residents and the types of industries found in Brooklyn would not be placed together. Local government is working to better place industry in more appropriate locations, but in the meantime, industry needs to continue to implement improvements to enable residents and industry to co-exist.

## RECENT AND PLANNED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Residents, industry, local government and EPA have cooperated to identify the following improvements to local major industries in reducing odour emissions. These are major achievements in what will be a long term process to improve the environment around Brooklyn.

- **SITA** - Composter - EPA amended the licence on 9 December 2008 to require full enclosure of the composting facilities by September 2010. Sita plans for all primary or active phase composting will be carried out within an enclosed building and all air emissions treated by bio-filters.
- **Australian Tallow** - Renderer - As part of the current EPA Works Approval Application to install a new rendering line, Australian Tallow has proposed to fully enclose the operations by the end of 2010. All building and ventilation air will be treated by bio-filters and the existing ventilation stack will be removed.
- **Cargill** - Oil seed processor - In late 2007 Cargill installed two biofilters on their processing line
- **Veolia** - Waste Treater - As part of a plant upgrade in 2008 Veolia installed a new scrubber capable of treating building air.

### Improvements in detail: Swift Australia

Swift Australia Pty Limited (Swift) purchased Tasman Group Services in May 2008. EPA had issued two notices requiring odour audits on the Tasman premises. In June 2008, Swift engaged The Odour Unit (TOU), to assess the design and performance of the existing biofilters on site.

The assessment and design work has been completed and recently Swift management approved the expenditure of over \$1M to install a new biofilter in accordance with TOU design and to modify building ventilation systems to direct the rendering building ventilation air into the new biofilter.

EPA is currently amending Swift's licence to permit the plant modification. TOU will oversee the installation, which is estimated to be operational within three months. The modifications will reduce odour from the site and the emission from the biofilter has an odour character similar to a weak earthy type smell, rather than a strong rendering smell, which is currently the case from the ventilation stack.

During the modification, Swift will redirect all air streams from the plant into the recently refurbished north-western biofilter. On specifications, the north-western biofilter can manage the increased load during construction. Swift will be undertaking twice daily inspections of the site during construction and keeping EPA updated on progress.

## FOCUS ON ODOUR

Odours are light, volatile (easy to evaporate) chemicals that float through the air into receptors in the nose. These receptors send messages to the brain which results in the sensation of smell. Receptors are genetically individual to every person, so different people will have different sensitivity and reactions to smell.

Industry licences issued by EPA require that:

"Odours offensive to the senses of human beings must not be discharged beyond the boundaries of the premises".

The Environment Protection Act does not restrict the emission of odour beyond the boundaries of the premises, only odour that is offensive.

Offensive odour affects the general life, health and well being of an individual, as a result of the intensity, character, frequency, and duration of the odour. People experience odours differently, so offensiveness can only be determined by the individual being affected.

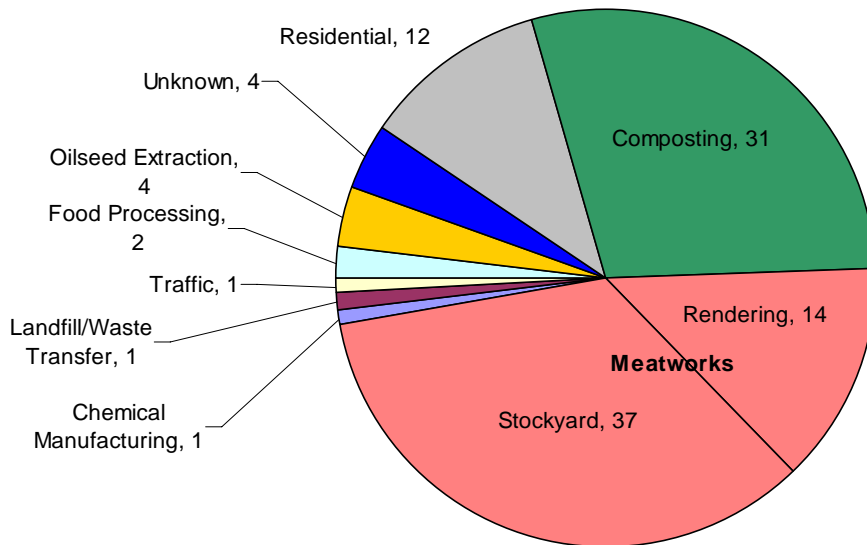
When community members report an odour, the EPA officer taking the call will ask questions about the nature, duration and effect the odour is having on them. EPA will allocate resources to further investigate the odour according to the severity of the odour being reported, the likelihood of making a positive verification of the odour source and the availability of accredited investigative staff. Many times, the odour has disappeared once the EPA officer arrives, which can be very disappointing for all parties

If EPA can verify that the odour is offensive and track the odour to the source, it can then pursue legal action, which requires the participation of the individuals reporting the offensive odour. This may involve the community reporter to sign a legal affidavits detailing how they are being affected, or to attend court to give evidence. Many people are unwilling to do this which prevents successful prosecutions.

There is a lengthy and involved process in prosecuting offensive odours, so EPA expects reporters to seriously assess the degree to which the offensiveness of the odour is affecting their life, health and well being and their willingness to participate in the legal process.

EPA also encourages community to report any source of pollution, even odours that are brief or weak. In this way EPA develops better intelligence on the types and patterns of emissions affecting local areas and can use this information to develop proactive improvements with industry.

**Strong Odours by Source**  
in Residential Areas July 2008 - April 2009



### **BROOKLYN ODOUR MONITORING PROGRAM**

EPA carries out regular odour monitoring at 13 fixed points in residential areas of Brooklyn, Yarraville, West Footscray and Braybrook, and 11 fixed points in industrial areas in Tottenham and Brooklyn.

At each point on the route a qualified EPA officer makes an odour assessment and records their observations. The monitoring is carried out morning and evening, every 6 days to give a good coverage of both weekday and weekend operations over the course of a year.

The monitoring determines if an odour is weak or strong, it does not make an assessment on whether the odour is offensive. Only a person whom the odour is affecting on a regular basis can determine if they find the odour offensive and affecting their every day life.

The monitoring program has given EPA a better understanding of the trends in nature, frequency and sources of odour in the area.

### **THE BROOKLYN COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP (BCRG)**

The BCRG aims to foster collaboration between community, industry and government to ensure ongoing clean air and reduced noise in the Brooklyn area. The group meets six-monthly, with additional information subgroups on specialised topics held throughout the year. The meetings are open for any member of the community to attend.

- Next BCRG meeting - 18 November 2009
- Odour meeting - 15 July 2009
- Dust meeting - 16 September 2009

### **REPORTING POLLUTION**

The community supports EPA by reporting pollution in its area to the **Pollution Watch Line** on **9695 2777**.

EPA officers use information such as wind data, recent field investigations and information from the community to determine possible sources. Follow-up action may include on-site attendance, after consideration of the extent, nature and severity of pollution reports from the community.

Local government can also respond to and prosecute complaints if companies are in breach of their planning permits:

**Brimbank City Council - 9249 4000.**

**Maribyrnong City Council - 9688 0200**

**Hobson Bay City Council - 9932 1000**

### **COMMUNITY CONTACTS**

There are three community-based groups participating in the BCRG:

#### **Yarraville On The Nose**

Contact Bruce on **9332 2808** or email [coord.onthenose@gmail.com](mailto:coord.onthenose@gmail.com)  
(Yarraville and Kingsville area west of Williamstown Road.)

#### **Brooklyn Residents Action Group (BRAG)**

Contact Jan on **0417 637 503**  
(Based in the Brooklyn area bounded by Geelong Road and the West Gate Freeway.)

#### **Sunshine Residents and Ratepayers Association (SunRRA)**

Contact Darlene at [secretary@sunshine.asn.au](mailto:secretary@sunshine.asn.au)  
(Based in the Sunshine area.)

The **BCRG Chair** is **Jen Lilburn, Kismet Forward**  
**ph: 0418 373 352.**