



**Brooklyn Recycling Group
Bimonthly BEP Working Group Meeting (No 2)
Wednesday, 5 February 2025 @ 10:00AM via Teams
Minutes**

In attendance:

- Gary Laidlaw – EPA
- Dale Irwin – EPA
- Paul Torre - EPA
- Motla Bellville Leshoele - EPA
- Matt O'Mara – Brimbank City Council
- Jake Repacholi – Hobsons Bay City Council
- Chris Pape – DEECA
- Katie Becker - DEECA
- Amber Greed – Sustainability Victoria
- Christian Buxton – Gypsum & Fertiliser
- James Georgiou – Delta Recycling
- Lee Malia – City Circle
- Monique Costantini – City Circle
- Ryan Craig – Resource Co
- Simon O'Shea – Resource Co
- Dr James Brett – Synergetics
- Lisa Field - observer
- Brian O'Neil – PRX
- Amelia O'Sullivan - PRX
- Stephen Kerr – PRX (Chair)

Apologies:

- Jeremy Settle – EPA
- Margaret Green - EPA
- Kristen Gilbert – Brimbank City Council
- Matt Skidmore – City Circle
- Dom Santullo – Delta Recycling

Minutes:

1. Welcome & Meeting Agenda

- Stephen Kerr (Chair) welcomed all attendees to the second Brooklyn Recycling Group (BRG) BEP (Better Environment Plan) Bimonthly Working Group Meeting.
- SK confirmed the role of this meeting was to provide direct feedback to key stakeholders and our community. The meeting would provide updates and reporting on the 8 Group Actions contained in the BEP and provide two-way feedback and dialogue. The facilitation of this meeting is a key deliverable of the BEP.



- SK referenced the publication of a story on Brooklyn and the BEP appeared in the Age on 1 January 2025 (attached, below). [Digital Link](#).
- SK confirmed that the first published Bimonthly Community Update would be circulated along with the Minutes from this meeting (attached).
- SK welcomed all attendees and introduced Lisa Field, a candidate the BEP Community Liaison Officer role and Millie O'Sullivan who has joined the project team at PRX.

2. EPA Update

Gary Laidlaw advised that is no specific compliance enforcement work related to the BEP. The EPA is conducting the usual activity in the Brooklyn areas. The BEP belongs to the four participants but the EPA happy to support it and attend meetings like this.

Gary advised that EPA Regional Manager, Steve Lansdell has announced his resignation from the EPA. An appointment process is underway but in the meantime Jeremy Settle will continue in the acting role. Christian Buxton asked that the EPA note our gratitude and thanks to Steve Lansdell for his support, particularly during the development of the BEP.

Dale Irwin said that adverse weather impacted our air quality and it remains a particular focus for this group. In response to a question from Lisa Field he advised that the EPA has written to approximately 40 local businesses on 27 January reminding them of the GEDs to manage dust. He asked the four participants to update their contact details for future reference.

Paul Torre said recent EPA activity has focused on an increase in odour which might explain an increased presence in recent times. He advised dust reports have increased as well. RPAS will continue to be used in the area to ensure dust is managed and the community is protected.

Christian Buxton commented that due to the dryer weather and strong northerly winds dust management has been an ongoing issue.

(Items 3, 4 and 5 – Refer Written update – attached)

3. Participant Update

- Gypsum & Fertiliser
- Delta Recycling
- City Circle
- ResourceCo

4. BEP – Summary of Work to Date – Dr James Brett

- Training
- Street Sweeping
- Dust monitoring
- Tree planting
- Communications

5. Areas of focus – to 30 June 2025 – Dr James Brett

- Establish protocols with LGAs to better coordinate street sweeping.



- Setup the audit system and conduct the first of the annual BEP audits and fully document progress to date.
- Plan and confirm budgets for the first stages of tree plantings and sensor testing.
- Ongoing goat removal program.
- Confirm appointment of Community Liaison Officer.

4. General Discussion

- Paul Torre (EPA) asked whether there could be one street sweeper permanently operating in the area. James Brett advised that options will become clearer once the meetings with the LGAs take place.
- Paul also asked what the BRG was doing to communicate with the community. Stephen Kerr advised that there was a full suite of communications tools that have been deployed and this meeting in itself was a key deliverable of the BEP. Activity will ramp up with the appointment of the Community Liaison Officer.
- Amber Greed (Sustainability Victoria) – asked whether soil testing had taken place in relation to the tree planting program. James Brett said that would take place prior to planting commencing but participants have provided information for consideration.
- Jake Repacholi (Hobsons Bay City Council) said they were pleased to see the BEP in action and would support appropriate activity where possible. He has suggested that the BEP be presented to the Mayor and Councillors at a future meeting. He said the BEP was raised at the Council meeting on 4 February.
- Jake also said that we could do more to raise the profile of the participant companies and he sees an opportunity to communicate with all businesses in the Brooklyn Industrial complex.
- Matt O'Mara (Brimbank City Council) has connected his colleague who managed street sweeping with James Brett.
- Katie Becker (DEECA) – said DEECA was pleased to be involved in the BEP and would advise when there was clarity around future grant rounds once that information was available.
- Stephen Kerr thanked DEECA and Sustainability Victoria for their support of the BEP – both financially and with ready feedback.

Date of next meeting – April 9, 2025 at 1000am via Teams

Meeting closed – 10.50am

ENDS

Attachments

Media article 31 December 2024

4 THE AGE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2025
NEWS



'It's beautiful, but we'd like fresh air': Life

Sophie Aubrey
City reporter

Maria Long trembles as she recalls the nights she would tuck her daughter and have to explain the reason small that had invaded the bedroom.

Summer was always the worst, when heat accelerated rotting flesh. "It would smell like a train full of dead elephants coming into your home," Maria says. "It still gives me to this day that we even had to put up with that."

Maria's children are adults now, but for 30 years, she has dealt with the psychological impact of dust and odour rattling her home. The 57-year-old lives in Brooklyn, the Melbourne suburb with the worst air pollution, and a microcosm of the environmental problems residents face in many parts of the west.

There are two sides to Brooklyn. On one, it is a quiet, residential neighbourhood that is home to about 2000 people.

Here, within the Hobsons Bay council boundary, double-fronted brick homes are increasingly turning into modern townhouses as young families seek a slice of affordable land 14 kilometres from the CBD.

"It's a beautiful place to live," says Brian, Maria's husband. "But we'd like to breathe fresh air. The industry shouldn't be there."

Just across the street Geelong Road, within Brimbank council, is an industrial zone with noisy operations from shuttles and new works to waste and recycling plants.

(left)

Deep in the industrial precinct are masses of crushed concrete, brick and bitumen. When The Age visits, a herd of feral goats roams the slopes of a disused landfill after escaping slaughter.

When a northerly wind blows, dust and smells are carried into Brooklyn homes, the closest of which are only 100 metres away. Brooklyn's residential pocket is hemmed in by three bearing roads: the West Gate Freeway, the Geelong Road section of the Princes Highway, and Millers Road, all running with trucks travelling to and from the Port of Melbourne.

Residents have been campaigning against pollution for decades and formed the Brooklyn Community Representative Group in 2008, bringing together the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), local councils and businesses.

There have been improvements. Air quality has exceeded PM10 standards when there is a high concentration of pollutant particles the size of dust nine times since July, down from a peak of 80 exceedances in the year 2019-20.

Neighbouring Footscray town's had more than one exceedance a year since 2019-20.

The number of odour reports in Brooklyn has fluctuated. There were 700 odour reports in 2019, falling to 4 in 2022, then rising again to more than 400 in 2024.

EPA western metropolitan regional manager Jeremy Settle says PM10 levels may have fallen because of better weather and recent works to seal dusty industrial roads and surfaces.



TESTS FOR THE WEST

As for odour, he says the EPA is working with the most processing plants.

"There is still a lot of work to be done out there," he says.

Industry built before residents moved in

In 1964, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works designated Brooklyn - then on the outskirts of the urban west - one of the city's "offensive industrial zones".

Houses followed, as Victoria's planners wanted to build homes for workers close to industrial areas such as Brooklyn's.

Today, Brooklyn's industrial and residential zones would not be allowed to exist in such proximity.

Under EPA guidelines, a buffer zone of up to one kilometre is required to separate homes from businesses in the animal processing and waste and recycling sectors.

But existing use rights are foundational to the state's planning system and allow businesses of a particular nature to continue in zoned areas.

The Agriattended the Brooklyn Community Representative Group's final gathering of 2024, at which a handful of residents

expressed their frustration at ongoing pollution after 17 years of meetings.

Young father Hayden, who has lived in the suburb for four years, is fed up with the lack of accountability from authorities.

"I had contemplated selling because sometimes when my two-year-old daughter goes out on the grass and comes back in, she returns with dusty hands and feet, and that's a real shame because I love Brooklyn," he says.

Christian Buxton's family-owned business, Sunshine Group, has operated in Brooklyn since the 1930s.

In September, his plasterboard recycling outfit EcoGroupum became one of four Brooklyn businesses to voluntarily register a Better Environment Plan, a Victorian-first legal commitment approved by the EPA for reducing dust pollution.

Measures include installing dust monitors, establishing wind breaks and sharing resources. Buxton says the four companies - the others being City Circle, ResourceCo and Delta Recycling - are spending a combined \$1 million on the improvements.

The businesses crash and recycle more than half of the state's construction materials waste, and Buxton says moving away would make them unviable as they would lose customers.

"My wish would be that we find a way to cohabit," he says.

Buxton hopes more Brooklyn companies join the environment plan. So far, no animal processing businesses have done so.

One of them, Australian Tallow Producers, has been sanctioned several times for odour smells, including a \$500,000 fine in 2015 and \$6000 in 2019.

Australian Tallow did not respond to questions. Data by local government area, collated by Torrens University, shows that health problems linked to air pollution occur at a higher rate in Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong council areas than in the general Australian population.

In 2021, the Inner West Air Quality Report, commissioned by the Victorian government, called for pollution from heavy industry and diesel trucks to be mitigated.

More than 6000 trucks are expected to travel through the state's \$80 billion West Gate Tunnel each day when it opens next year. While this is expected to remove diesel-spewing heavy trucks from local roads in Yarraville, they will be funnelled past Brooklyn homes via an exit ramp on Millers Road.

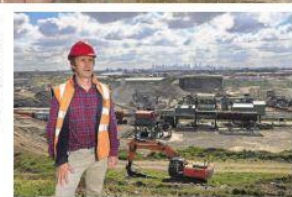
A government spokesperson said the West Gate Tunnel would remove more than 1000 trucks from residential streets.

"The opening of the Metro Tunnel and West Gate Tunnel in 2025 will make a big difference for our growing west, helping people get home sooner, and connecting them with critical jobs and services," the spokesperson said.

Alex Damasciote is another living so close to heavy industry and trucks. She worries about the health of her children, aged seven, 10 and 14.



Brian Long (left), a Brooklyn resident for 30 years, frequently washes his car to deal with constant dust. Alex Damasciote (above) worries about her children's exposure to pollutants. Christian Buxton (right) runs a plasterboard recycling business in Brooklyn, and is one of four businesses operators to have signed on to a voluntary scheme to reduce dust pollution. Photos: Justin McManus, Jason South



in our industrial heart

The family lives in Altona North, next to Brooklyn, and Damasciote shuttles her two youngest to Christian Buxton (right) runs a plasterboard recycling business in Brooklyn, and is one of four businesses operators to have signed on to a voluntary scheme to reduce dust pollution.

Photos: Justin McManus, Jason South



But Damasciote wants to see government action. She grew up in leafy Armadale before moving west in 2008 to be near her husband's family.

"It's just chalk and cheese. We had tree-lined streets, and you could open your window without worrying about dust and odours," she says. "There's dust all over my car and my window sills are black."

Similar issues play out across Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong councils. Recently, the west had had

major, prolonged incidents. In July, thick black smoke billowed over the western suburbs after a chemical explosion sparked the worst industrial fire in six years in a Derwent factory.

In Koolba, a fire has been burning deep underground at a multicultural restaurants and easy access to the beach, parkland and CBD.

The operator, Barro Group, had its licence cancelled by the EPA.

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A green legacy for future generations

Advocacy groups have been working to make the west greener. Greening The West has helped drive about 140 million in federal and state funding for projects including the planting of more than 1 million trees, cleaning up waterways and supporting the Greening The

Pipeline, a 27-kilometre green corridor and bicycle track that would connect Wertheim to central Melbourne.

Geoff Mitchellmore, 84, founded the Friends of Lower Kororo Creek at Altona North in 2001 and has led the transformation of the waterway from dead-end and polluted to lush and bird-free.

A 2004 bird count identified 40 species. In 2020, they found 160.

"There was nothing here. No trees, no paths, no picnic tables, just weeds, rubbish and a lot of dog droppings," Mitchellmore says.

He negotiated millions in public and private investment, and now wants to plant a forest in Brooklyn's industrial precinct to filter dust.

"My biggest concern is the health and wellbeing of the community - all those young kids growing up in all that dust," he says.

Mitchellmore has lived in Altona North since 1984, and despite frustrations, loves the west.

He's excited about plans for a wetlands centre in Altona Meadows at the Cheetham Wetlands, which host thousands of migrating shorebirds each summer.

"The other side of town is developed right to the waterfront with housing, but in the west, we've got this preserved forever," he says.

Digital Link for Age media article.



Community Update

Better Environment Plan Community Update February 2025

The BRG commits to updating the community on a bimonthly basis regarding:

1. Group Actions contained in the BEP
2. Individual actions of the participant companies

This is the first update and covers the period from 1 August 2024 (confirmation date) to 31 January 2025.

Group Actions:

There are 8 Group Actions which can be reduced to 5 work streams:

1. Training:

A bespoke training module focused on dust mitigation has been created and is currently being deployed by all staff employed at the 4 participant sites at Brooklyn. The online training module has been completed by over 70% of staff so far – the aim being to approach 100% early in 2025. Completion of the training module is compulsory for all new staff.

2. Dust sensors:

Extensive R&D is underway to develop a shared dust monitoring system that allows the 4 participants to collaborate to mitigate dust generation. An agnostic Australian software designer has been identified to supply software that will “talk” to the existing monitoring systems. Data will be shared across the sites and if sensors are triggered a protocol will be in place to drive an immediate response to manage dust generation. Wind sources from 19 different directions/velocities has been analysed and locations of monitors have been scientifically considered to provide optimal results.

R&D is complete and installation of the new sensors and software across the four participants will start in March 2025.

3. Tree planting:

Experts from a range of disciplines have been consulted with a view to:

- Planting tree and shrub species that have the best chance of survival
- Soil testing at preferred locations noting that a large proportion of soil has in fact been relocated

3D models have been developed that show the dust capture scenarios from various planting mixes of trees and shrubs. Data that models wind from 19 different directions/velocities has also been considered.

The Friends of the Koroit Creek Association, via Geoff Mitchelmore, have been particularly helpful in this regard. We look forward to working with Geoff on delivery of this part of the BEP.

In addition, the removal of the ‘feral’ goat population is currently underway. Previous tree planting programs in the area have been ruined by the goats.



Expert advice has indicated 'trial' planting is preferred at selected sites. At this stage, planting will commence in Autumn 2025.

4. Street Sweeping:

The 4 participants operate their own discrete street sweeping programs. In conjunction with Brimbank and Hobsons Bay councils, there is broad agreement to develop an integrated program of sweeping that ensures optimum outcomes for our community. This initiative will advance in February 2025.

5. Communications:

The BRG commits to open, honest and transparent communications with our community.

This has focused on:

- Extensive community outreach and presentations to forums including the Brooklyn Community Representative Group (BCRG), Western Metro Community Consultation Group (WMCCG) and the Friends of the Lower Koroit Creek Association.
- The hosting of the inaugural BEP Bimonthly Working Group meeting with representatives of the community, EPA, Sustainability Victoria, DEECA, LGAs and the four participants. The minutes from this meeting have been posted on our website.
- The BRG has published a web site and brochure and is posting via social media platforms.
- The BRG will increase efforts to confirm a suitable candidate as our Community Liaison Officer after our initial prospect had to withdraw her application for reasons outside our control.

Individual Actions

The 4 BEP participants continue to invest significant resources in the upgrading of sites, plant and equipment and staff training at their Brooklyn sites.

Background regarding their operations and upgrade programs is as follows:

Gypsum & Fertiliser:

- Focused on recycled gypsum derived from clean plasterboard waste. The recycled gypsum is a highly concentrated and soluble source of gypsum with a low sodium content. The gypsum products are in demand from primary producers and horticulturalists around Victoria.

Work in progress:

- Mobile Mist Spray trucks have been commissioned and are available on a needs-basis.
- Loading bay and Boundary Line Dust fencing - Shipping container fencing and bays have been installed and constructed to manage dust while loading trucks.
- Plant Upgrades and spray installation - 50 % of the works on the plant upgrades have been completed. Works are scheduled to be complete by May 2025.

City Circle:



- Our materials are primarily sold into the civil construction industry for subgrade in road pavements, pipe bedding and hardstands. We recycle concrete brick and rock into 20mm road base and engineered fill.
- In 2024 we undertook the following works (circa \$3 million investment)
 - Plant upgrade to reduce loader movements and transfer points within the plant itself
 - Traffic redesign, to help improve the flow of trucks within the site and reduce drag out
 - Hardstand and drainage redesign. We sealed over 6000 sqm and altered the levels of the site to reduce dust and eliminate the chance of storm water discharge from site and improve our ability to recycle water for dust suppression.
 - Tree planting.
- Upgrade projects planned in 2025 (circa \$300,000 investment – budgeted)
 - Further tree planting
 - Covers on product conveyor transfer points.
 - Further hard standing.

Delta Recycling:

- We focus on construction and demolition waste recycling that provides a green alternative to virgin quarry products. Recycled materials processed and sold on-site are predominantly used as road base materials which are DoT (previously VicRoads) approved. Key raw materials recycled are concrete, brick and excavation rock.
- Market for recycled products:
 - Large government infrastructure road projects
 - Subdivisions
 - Industrial hardstands
 - Backfill material
 - Capping material
- Upgrade projects undertaken in 2024
 - Installation of dust monitors on each boundary of the site
 - Plant hopper upgraded - designed to handle more throughput which will reduce crushing hours
- Upgrade projects planned in 2025
 - Increased vegetation & tree planting
 - Additional hard standing where practical
 - Further improve dust suppression systems as new technology becomes available
- Investment \$2.0m over the last 5 years

ResourceCo:

Construction and Demolition waste processing to produce recycle products (mulch, soils and aggregates) back into the construction market.



Market for recycled products: Construction industry including Big Build Projects, VicRoads and Melbourne Water. Receiving waste from bin companies and private developers around Melbourne.

2024 projects included:

- Consolidation of crushing plant - focus on singular plant management of issues and management of dust/sprays/emissions
- Traffic management & flow to improve impacts on Bunting Road

2025 projects include:

- Landscape upgrade
- Wheelwash upgrade
- Continued work on Site Water & Dust Management.

ENDS