

Tarago rail yards lead contamination

Questions and answers from the livestream event held on Thursday 14 May 2020.

1. Why has there been a delay in sending out test result reports for private properties?

Ramboll Group, environmental specialists, were initially brought in to test 20 private properties. This testing started in late March 2020. A further 20 properties have since been added to the testing schedule increasing the workload. Restrictions as a result of COVID-19 have also delayed delivery. There are now over 700 test samples taken for analysis. This rise in the number of samples and the work restrictions of COVID-19 means we have not met all of our original timelines for getting results back to residents, we apologise for this. As at 17 June, all results have been communicated to residents.

2. What is the process for clearing the reports for private property testing?

The process includes the collection of data and site assessment, analysis of the samples at a certified laboratory, comparison of the results to the relevant guidelines, preparation of a report and review of the report by two independent scientific experts. The resident is then contacted by phone to discuss the results of the testing and the report is provided to the residents. We are also available to answer any subsequent questions the resident may have.

3. What are we going to do with the results from land which is not Transport for NSW land?

Transport for NSW will take accountability for and manage the clean-up and remediation for the area contaminated as a result of run off from the rail corridor and old station masters cottage.

For other sites in the Tarago Township where we are seeing contamination eg the historic haul road, Transport for NSW will continue to work with other NSW Government departments and Goulburn Mulwaree Council to develop solutions for how this contamination will be managed, and if required, remediated.

The first phase, which is occurring currently, is to get the best available information and understand the risks. Following the information gathering phase, decisions can be made about the scale of work required. We will have built an understanding of the pathways which contamination could reach people and the controls that could be put in place to mitigate the impacts. We are having ongoing conversations with the NSW EPA about possible remediation actions as information is gathered.

4. Why is it not feasible to remove the contaminated material? This could happen again in the future if the material is not removed.

Complete removal is not always the best solution. The objective is to mitigate the risk to human health and the environment from the contaminated material. Should contaminated material be contained onsite (in situ retention) the remediation plan for the site will have

robust monitoring in place to ensure re-exposure to the contamination does not occur. The monitoring will be covered in a Remediation Action Plan that is committed to under the Voluntary Management Plan. The NSW EPA has approved and will oversee the Voluntary Management Plan including ongoing environmental monitoring.

The rail corridor site will remain as a Declared Site until the NSW EPA and an independent auditor are satisfied that the site is remediated and exposure pathways mitigated.

5. We were advised the sediment in our water tank exceeded the drinking water threshold by 300%. This interpretation was later changed. Why is this?

Sediment laden water was initially assessed against a drinking water guideline. When the results were reviewed by the two independent experts a different interpretation of what the results should be compared to was put forward. Sediment laden water is now compared against soil guidelines rather than drinking water. Drinking water guidelines are based on people consuming two litres of water per day. It is considered highly unlikely anyone would drink two litres of sediment laden water per day due to the fact that the water would clearly be seen to contain large amounts of dirt.

Based on this new interpretation we are now assessing sediment in water tanks by assessing dried sediment. This will allow us to understand how sediment, when cleaned out of tanks can be used and what management is needed to ensure safe disposal/reuse. Advice on this is under development and will be communicated with the Tarago community.

6. What has Transport for NSW learned about how we work with and inform the community about our work?

We have learned a lot and are making changes to our policies and processes as a result. Rail corridors are industrial zones and in the past we have focused on this zone for these kind of projects. We are now going to ensure this focus is extended outside this zone to the community and environment adjoining the rail corridor and all those impacted by our work.

Reducing the impact of our work on the community is a priority for Transport for NSW. We have a number of options to reduce the impact on the community from onsite actions, such as using appropriate machinery, suppressing dust and reducing noise. We must also provide clear and timely information to residents about what work we are carrying out and the impact the community can expect.