

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS SURROUNDING THE FORMER GAS WORKS SITE IN BRIDGE ROAD, NOWRA

FACT SHEET 1

Project Overview

Shoalhaven City Council is undertaking environmental investigations on properties surrounding the former gas works site to assess whether there has been any migration of contaminants from the former gas works site on Bridge Road, Nowra.

There is little evidence that the type of waste that may be present generates an unacceptable risk to site users and neighbours. Nevertheless Council is adopting a precautionary approach (as endorsed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)) and undertaking these investigations.

Expert consultants in this field, GHD Pty Ltd have been engaged by Council to oversee these investigations. Their preliminary desktop assessment of the area around the gas works site has indicated that there may be off-site contamination, but that sampling and testing should be carried out in order to confirm whether this is the case. The investigations will include testing of soils, soil vapour, surface water and groundwater.

That desktop assessment included reviewing relevant studies, reports, historical aerial photos, EPA registers and other information, as well as interviews with former gasworks employees and broad site inspections, then using their experience to interpret that information.

Council is seeking permission from landowners, residents and businesses within the identified area to undertake these investigations (see map).

The investigation results will then be used to assess any environmental risks associated with the past operation of the gas works.

All costs associated with the investigations are being met by Council.

Project Background

Council was the owner and operator of a gas works site in Bridge Road, Nowra from the early 1900s to the late 1960s. It used a process called coal carbonisation to produce the gas, now known to have produced by-products, some of which are regarded as contaminants. Many other local authorities throughout the State with former gas works sites face similar issues.

In 2007, Council remediated the gas works site which is now used as a car park. This remediation was in accordance with guidelines set by the EPA.

In 2009, remediation work was also undertaken in Harry Sawkins Park after off-site contamination consistent with the gas works operations was detected.

Potential health or environmental risks

The health and safety of the community and our environment is of the greatest importance for Council. While there is little evidence that the type of waste that may be present generates an unacceptable risk to site users and neighbours, Council has adopted a precautionary approach (as endorsed by the EPA), hence these investigations.

What do the investigations involve?

There are a number of different techniques and processes to sample groundwater, soil vapour and soil. One common way to test for contaminants is to install monitoring devices including small bores and wells in the ground.

These may be installed either by a hand-held boring device (slide hammer) or by a small drill rig (approximately the size of a box trailer) which may take between half a day and one day to install. The

monitoring devices are commonly about 100mm in diameter and are often covered by a steel cap level with the ground. The techniques and processes to be used during these investigations will be confirmed and further details made available, once Council has engaged additional specialists to undertake these studies.

The project team will work with landowners to determine appropriate locations for any monitoring devices and minimise any disturbance where possible. After approximately one week, the environmental specialists will need to come back to take readings from the monitoring devices which will take between one and two hours to complete. Depending on the results, these monitoring devices may be left in place so that additional readings can be taken in the future.

The investigations will be looking for potential contaminants which can be found in ash, coke and tar impacted soils and are mainly organic compounds known as total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPHs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), phenols and BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes).

Next steps

Should elevated levels of contaminants be found then Council will seek advice from a health risk expert, again in consultation with landowners, tenants and the community.

Further investigations and monitoring may also need to be completed and options for remediation assessed if elevated levels of contaminants are found.

Council is committed to keeping the community informed of the results of these investigations and will provide further details about any potential remediation works as required.

How do I find out more?

If you have any further queries relating to these investigations please contact Council's Project Manager, Alan Stasiukynas on 02 4429 3266 or email stasiukynas@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au.

Area Requiring Further Environmental Assessment



