ENERGY BRIX AUSTRALIA

FACTS

ASBESTOS REMOVAL AND ASBESTOS DISPOSAL CELL

Why are you holding a community meeting?

Energy Brix Australia Corporation (EBAC) is requesting approval from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Latrobe City Council (LCC) to construct an asbestos landfill cell at its EBAC site in Morwell. This requires a works approval process through the EPA. One of the requirements of the works approval process is to hold public consultation around the approval being sought. This community meeting forms part of that public consultation.

Why is an onsite asbestos disposal cell required?

EBAC expects to have between 10-15,000m3 of asbestos material and asbestos contaminated material produced during its demolition activities. If this material was either trucked off-site to a licensed industrial asbestos landfill site (either Dutson Downs or Melbourne), a significant transport and accident risk are created. Asbestos is a very inert and safe product once buried, so we believe the safest handling mechanism is to dispose of it on site in a specially designed cell.

Why can't Hazelwood and EBAC share an asbestos disposal cell?

ENGIE Hazelwood and EBAC held joint discussions with the EPA in March this year, proposing this as the best solution. However the EPA, due to its regulations, cannot allow one party to dispose of another party's waste without becoming a licensed landfill operator. Neither EBAC nor ENGIE were able to satisfy the EPA requirements to become a licensed landfill operator (with its additional regulations and risks) so this concept was unfortunately abandoned.

How safe is an asbestos disposal cell?

Asbestos disposal cells are strictly engineered and all construction must be signed off by a third party independent construction inspector. The cells are designed to the same standard required for general landfill waste even though asbestos is non-migratory in soil. The cells are constructed at least two metres clear of any underground water table and fully lined with impervious clay to ensure any leachate does not enter water tables. All asbestos disposed into the cell is fully contained in air-tight containers and double plastic wrapped prior to disposal.

How large will the storage cell be?

The cell is planned to be approximately 80 metres in length and 30 metres wide. It will be about six metres in depth and designed as having four individual cells within the one excavation to allow for progressive filling as the demolition project progresses.

Is there any chance of asbestos escaping into the air while it is being removed from the old power station?

Asbestos removal procedures are very strictly controlled via codes of practice and safety regulations. Removal can only be carried out via licensed contractors and removal procedures depend on the level of risk in the material being removed. Friable asbestos (Class A) must be removed within negative air units that ensure all fibres released during stripping are captured and contained within the negative air structure. All material removed from negative ait units (i.e. bagged asbestos) are double wrapped and strictly cleaned prior to removal. Class B asbestos (bonded asbestos) is removed while wearing appropriate personal protective apparel (PPE) and again double wrapped in sealed plastic prior to disposal. Background asbestos fibre monitoring is also undertaken during Class A removal work to ensure no fibres are being released into the atmosphere. Following asbestos removal, an independent hygienist also inspects the removal area to ensure all visible signs of asbestos have been fully removed. Only once this confirmation is received can other work commence in the area.

Will the asbestos disposal cell create any risk of asbestos fibre release to nearby Morwell residences or businesses?

No - all asbestos material removed during the demolition process will be under strict OH&S and WorkSafe guidelines, with the majority of it being asbestos cement sheeting similar to that used in lot of old house construction. Once removed, the asbestos will then be placed in purposeful designed double asbestos plastic bagging or double wrapped. These mechanism then keep all removed material air tight until it is placed in the disposal cell. One of the reasons we are recommending local disposal on site is that this minimises the risk of a transport accident causing a contamination event to occur. Once buried where no fibres can become airborne, asbestos is a very safe material as it does not leach into underground soil or waterways.

Will background air monitoring be undertaken at the disposal site?

While there should be no capability for asbestos fibres to be released during the disposal actions, random background fibre counts will be conducted by an independent hygiene auditor to ensure no fibre release is occurring when the wrapped asbestos is being placed in the storage cell and buried. Background monitoring is conducted at an alert level that is five times below the allowable licensed limit for fibre production.

How will the site be marked for future reference to ensure the buried asbestos is not disturbed?

The site will be GPS marked and recorded on both the EPA and LCCI waste data bases. At the completion of demolition, an earthen dome will be placed over the top of the disposal cell to minimise water ingress it. The site will be farm-fenced and appropriate signage put in place. The site may potentially be planted with local native shrubs to improve its amenity.

Will other material besides asbestos be placed in the cell?

Only asbestos and asbestos contaminated material will be placed in the cell. This could include contaminated brickwork, asbestos gaskets bound by steel plates, asbestos contaminated synthetic mineral fibre and contaminated steel. All other waste material will be removed from site and disposed into licensed landfill sites.

What requirements has the LCC requested for its approval?

The council has requested EBAC carries out the appropriate design as per EPA guidelines and regulations and also to complete:

- A fire management plan for the proposed site;
- A storm water management strategy; and
- A cell capping strategy.

What happens once you get approval from the EPA and LCC?

EBAC is preparing a works approval application for the disposal cell and a council planning permit application. Both of these submissions will occur prior to the end of November and then be considered in the following months. We are requesting that both the EPA and council sign off on our submissions by March 2018 to enable cell construction to occur prior to the wet weather period. Demolition of the EBAC power station is targeted to commence in February /March 2018 (once Heritage Victoria matters are resolved) with the first 10 months of the program largely dedicated to hazardous material removal. If the asbestos disposal cell is not constructed in time to meet the start of the demolition program, the asbestos will be stored on site in sealed containers, ready for disposal when the cell construction is complete.

What does the Gippsland Waste and Resource Recovery Group think of the concept?

EBAC has received a letter from Mathew Peake, the GWRRG executive officer, supporting this concept due to the lower transportation risk it creates for nearby communities. It is also doubtful that sufficient capacity exists within the Longford industrial asbestos disposal facility to accommodate this quantity of asbestos.

Will the asbestos removal project create any local jobs?

Due to the size of this removal and demolition activity, it is too big for any of the local contractors in their own right. Ultimately the lead demolition contractor (yet to be appointed) is responsible for the total project including asbestos removal. Given the size of this asbestos removal activity, it is likely to be a large removal company that undertakes the work. The top five demolition companies from within Australia have all tendered for this project and the selection process is currently in progress. We will be encouraging the successful tenderer to recruit/utilise local labour when possible. Obviously the project will also bring additional people to work in Latrobe Valley so this will assist local businesses as well.

What should people do if they still hold concerns?

EBAC has engaged a local company, Wordwise Communications (Lynne Smith), to handle any enquiries. If you have any questions on the proposal or wish to express a view, it should be forwarded to the EBAC demolition web page, and Lynne and EBAC will follow up to address your concerns.

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