

# SOIL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS BEING CONSIDERED FOR WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

The West Gate Tunnel Project is an essential project for Melbourne's west to give motorists a much-needed alternative to the West Gate Bridge and slashing travel times by up to 20 minutes.

Work is well underway on widening the West Gate Freeway from 8 to 12 through lanes and building an elevated road above Footscray Road.

Shortly, the West Gate Tunnel Project builders will begin operating their tunnel boring machines, which will excavate rock and soil as they dig twin tunnels underneath Yarraville.



*Shed at the Northern Portal where soil will be loaded onto trucks.*

In preparation for that, Transurban and its builder are working with project parties to find a long-term solution to safely manage the rock and soil created during tunnelling. This includes finding a permanent disposal site, and having a temporary, back-up holding site, to be used only when the permanent site can't be accessed.

As identified through the planning process for the West Gate Tunnel Project, and through ground testing, it has been identified that soil excavated during tunnelling is expected to have low levels of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and so plans are being put into place to ensure it's safe management.

No decisions have been made in relation to permanent or temporary back-up sites.

The use of any site would be subject to environmental and planning approvals.

## What is being considered at Wyndham Vale?

A site at Hobbs Road, Wyndham Vale is being investigated as a temporary, back-up site. The site is not being considered for permanent storage.

No decisions have been made yet about the Wyndham Vale site.

If implemented, it would hold soil from tunnelling for a short period of time - only in extenuating circumstances - when the main site can't be accessed.

The soil would be stored temporarily before being relocated to the permanent storage site.

## Safeguarding people and the environment

Extensive research shows that there is no consistent evidence that PFAS is harmful to human health (The Australian Government's Expert Health Panel for PFAS Report 2018).

Despite this, the West Gate Tunnel Project will take all necessary safety measures, including:

- covering and lining trucks during transportation,
- dampening the soil so there is no dust,
- minimising noise, and
- protecting groundwater and waterways by lining any site where it is stored.

Any solution being considered would need to be based on best practice environmental management and meet the requirements of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

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Truck carrying covered soil.

## How the site would work

If trucks were unable to deliver rock and soil to the main storage site – for example if there was a flood or bushfire that closed access to the main storage site, trucks would be diverted to the Hobbs Road location in Wyndham Vale.

The site would have a series of lined holding bays, and containment walls would be put around each site to contain the soil. Trucks would enter and exit the site using the existing and new entrances on Hobbs Road.

If the Wyndham Vale site was to be used, these bays would have the capacity to temporarily store a maximum of 21 days of dirt and soil before being taken by truck to the permanent storage site.

Management of a temporary site would be in accordance with strict EPA requirements.

## Next steps

The project parties are currently:

- engaging with key stakeholders to get their input and understand any issues,
- completing site investigations to measure the impact of noise, traffic, flora and fauna, cultural heritage groundwater and geological conditions amongst others, and
- working closely with the EPA and other authorities.

The use of this site would be subject to environmental and planning approvals.

## What is PFAS and why is it of concern during tunnelling

Historically, in Australia, the mix of chemicals known as PFAS has been found in fire-fighting foams, industrial areas and landfill sites. A large part of Melbourne's inner west was an industrial area which has meant the PFAS has sat dormant over the years. The West Gate Tunnel Project has found low levels of PFAS, which are not harmful to the public during the removal, relocation or disposal of the soil.

PFAS has also been found in paints, shampoo, non-stick cookware and pesticides. Since 2002, the Australian Government has been working to reduce the use of PFAS in all products.

**For more information please contact the West Gate Tunnel Project on 1800 105 105 or email at [info@wgta.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@wgta.vic.gov.au)**

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