

Community Information

INDUSTRIAL NOISE IN IVANHOE, HEIDELBERG WEST AND THORNBURY

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INTRODUCTION

This *Community Information* provides an update on work being done by EPA Victoria and the Cities of Banyule and Darebin to solve noise problems being experienced by residents in the Heidelberg West, Ivanhoe, Preston and Thornbury areas near to the Preston Industrial Estate.

BACKGROUND

EPA and the Banyule and Darebin councils have been working for some time to identify and reduce noise levels from the Preston Industrial area, which is the area bounded by Dundas, Albert and Bell Streets and Darebin Creek.

Whilst some improvements were made, EPA monitoring in March 2003 confirmed that noise coming from the industrial area had increased. The noise is generally described as droning or humming.

A community meeting held on 31 March 2003 – chaired by Craig Langdon MP, State Member for Ivanhoe and attended by residents and representatives of EPA, Banyule and Darebin City Councils – discussed plans for reducing the noise. At this meeting, one of the problems communicated to residents was the difficulty of identifying the industrial facilities and the individual noise sources contributing to the overall noise levels affecting the residential area.

EPA has since acquired new equipment which makes it possible to identify specific (tonal) sources of the noise. EPA has been using this equipment since June.

HOW IS INDUSTRIAL NOISE MEASURED AND REGULATED?

The *State Environment Protection Policy (Control of Noise from Commerce, Industry and Trade) No N-1* defines appropriate levels of noise from industrial sources. The policy sets down noise limits for both daytime and night time noise. Under this policy the noise limit is based on the local landuse planning, and the background noise level without industrial noise sources.

The policy sets a night time (10pm to 7am) noise limit of 39 decibels (dB(A)) for the Ivanhoe residential area.

STATUS OF RECENT NOISE MONITORING ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY EPA

In June, July and August 2003 EPA officers conducted night time noise monitoring in residential areas in Ivanhoe and in the Preston industrial area. Noise levels of 50dB(A) were measured at night in the residential area. At least 20 different tones (or individual frequencies) were identified as

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contributing to the noise being experienced by Ivanhoe residents.

EPA has undertaken inspections and noise measurements at industrial sites that operate at night to identify noisy equipment with tonal characteristics. EPA has compared this data with the prominent tones impacting on the residential area.

To date three companies have been positively identified as significantly contributing to the night time noise levels in the residential area. These companies are Burgess Furniture, Huhtamaki and Pliant Corporation. Since EPA has identified these companies as contributing to the noise they have worked co-operatively with EPA to resolve the noise.

PROGRESS WITH SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMPANIES

Burgess Furniture had installed new equipment, which was not in itself noisy and only operated during the day. However, the installation of the equipment allowed the noise to escape from the previously noise-reduced (attenuated) dust cyclone. Seven of the 20 identified tones found by EPA are from this source. Burgess Furniture has engaged an acoustic consultant who is currently designing noise abatement works. In the interim Burgess Furniture has committed to operate only to 10pm weeknights, instead of 12 midnight. This has taken effect from 8 September for around eight weeks or until the noise attenuation works are installed.

At Pliant Corporation a specific frequency of noise (one tone) associated with the dust collectors on top of the polymer silos was identified. This equipment

runs periodically for about three to four minutes then turns off. The noise emitted from this equipment is contributing the overall noise levels in the residential area. Pliant had previously undertaken works on other roof-mounted equipment, which reduced previous noise emissions. Noise from that roof-mounted equipment has not increased.

Huhtamaki has been identified as the other major source of several of the tonal frequencies. At least three different items of equipment are contributing to the noise emissions from this site. Huhtamaki will not be operating some of this equipment over the forthcoming school holiday period (22 September to 3 October). This time will be used to investigate the equipment and design noise attenuation works. During this period residents may notice a change in noise character and a reduction in the overall noise level.

Weather permitting, EPA will be using this time to identify any other tones and the industrial sources that are contributing to the overall noise level in a significant way.

WHAT OTHER ACTIONS WILL EPA BE TAKING TO REDUCE NOISE?

It will be important that the gains made on reducing the noise sources in the Preston industrial area are not lost. To ensure this, EPA has issued the companies known to be contributing to the noise with Pollution Abatement Notices (PANs). These PANs specify the noise reduction that needs to be achieved and the time that it will take to reduce the noise as well as requiring the companies to prepare environment improvement plans to demonstrate

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how they will control their noise emissions in the future to help prevent noise levels from increasing again.

WHEN SHOULD THE WORKS BE COMPLETED?

At this stage the various works being undertaken by the companies are to be completed within the next three to four months. The exact timing is dependent on the time taken to identify the best way to fix the problem, source appropriate equipment, build it if necessary and to install it. Progressive reduction in noise will be achieved as the works are implemented over this period. Some works are required to be completed by mid October, others by the end of November and the latest compliance date for works is January 2004.

RECENT SURVEY OF RESIDENTS CONDUCTED BY BANYULE COUNCIL

As part of Council's Health Act nuisance investigation a survey was sent to approximately 2,400 residents.

The purpose of the survey was to prepare a list of potential witnesses for possible future legal action and gather evidence about how these potential witnesses are being affected by the noise.

Consequently it was only necessary for residents who are prepared to go to court to respond. These people will be contacted at the conclusion of the EPA investigation to determine if they are still affected by the noise. At this point in time, if there is a possibility that the noise can be deemed a nuisance further action will be taken. If you have not

responded and wish to add your name to the list of potential witnesses please contact Lisa Raywood at Banyule City Council on 9457 9923.

RECENT CONSULTATION BETWEEN COUNCIL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND FACTORY OPERATORS

To encourage factory operators to minimise their noise emissions Banyule and Darebin Health Departments conducted joint visits during September. The implications of the noise emissions were discussed along with strategies that could be implemented to further manage their noise output.

FUTURE UPDATES

The Cities of Darebin and Banyule and EPA will continue to work jointly on resolving this issue and will provide regular updates on progress. A residents meeting is proposed for early December when major noise reduction works are complete.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

To report pollution or noise, please call: EPA Pollution Watch Line on 9695 2777.

Banyule City Council on 9457 9965.

Darebin City Council on 9230 4659.



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