



Department of
Environment and Conservation (NSW)

Our reference : MOF21140
Contact : Ross Carter - 9995 6800

13 JAN 2006

Ms R Simpson
Director
Joint Select Committee on the Cross City Tunnel
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

JSC CROSS CITY TUNNEL

16 JAN 2006

RECEIVED

Dear Ms Simpson

Inquiry into Cross City Tunnel – Questions on Notice

I refer to your correspondence of 8 December 2005 requesting answers to questions taken on notice during the appearance of Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) representatives at the Joint Select Committee on the Cross City Tunnel hearing on 7 December 2005.

Please find the responses to these questions attached.

Yours sincerely

LISA CORBYN
Director General

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question 1: *Did you require an assessment of the greenhouse implications of the tunnel?*

Response: The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is not responsible for the assessment process as this is specified under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which is administered by the Department of Planning (DoP). However greenhouse impacts were required to be considered during the environmental assessment process and conditions addressing greenhouse emissions were imposed in the development consent for the project. The DEC worked closely with the DoP during the assessment of the Cross City Tunnel proposal to maximise the opportunities presented by the project for improving public transport and to minimise any adverse greenhouse implications that the proposal would have.

Question 2: *Does the Department of Environment and Conservation have a clean-up and prohibition notice for the Cross City Tunnel?*

Response: No. The DEC has not issued any such legal notice concerning operations of the Cross City Tunnel. Operation of the tunnel is regulated through Conditions of Approval issued by the Minister for Planning. The DEC would provide advice to DoP upon request should issues concerning operation of the tunnel arise.

Question 3: *What action are you taking to ensure that the RTA provides adequate signage to tunnel users warning them to wind up windows and turn off air intake, as highlighted by you and by the Department of Health? I understand this has been highlighted many times for the M5 East and for this tunnel, but it has not happened. How are you pursuing this?*

Response: The DEC has participated in an Interagency Working Group on nitrogen dioxide in tunnels. The Working Group also includes the DoP, NSW Health and the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).

The Working Group has examined precautionary measures for advising tunnel users on minimising nitrogen dioxide exposure and has provided input into a comprehensive RTA education campaign for staying safe in Sydney's tunnels.

The RTA's education campaign advises motorists of the benefits of closing windows and switching vehicle ventilation to re-circulate. The effectiveness of the campaign is being monitored and the need for additional advisory measures will be considered if appropriate.

Question 4: *Why then does the approval condition not include any monitoring of possible portal emissions? Why are there no fines for portal emissions in the Cross City Tunnel despite regular portal emissions occurring from the M5 East tunnel? What process is in place to ensure that the lessons learned on one such project will be transferred to subsequent projects?*

Response: The Conditions of Approval for the Cross City Tunnel require that tunnel ventilation system is designed, constructed and operated to avoid, to the greatest extent practical, emissions from the tunnel portals. Enforcement of this requirement would be conducted by DoP, with technical advice provided by the DEC as required. The planning legislation includes a range of actions that can be taken for breaches of Conditions of Approval

As indicated at the Select Committee hearing, the DEC does not consider that monitoring at portals is required provided it is demonstrated that there is a net inflow of air at the tunnel portals.

The DEC places particular emphasis on reviewing the environmental outcomes of infrastructure projects as a mechanism for achieving continuous improvement. The DEC's input to the planning process for the Cross City Tunnel drew considerably on experiences with previous road and tunnelling projects.

Supplementary Question 1: *Could you provide the traffic models for the number of cars and emissions per car that were used to compare total pollution produced before and after the opening of the Cross City Tunnel?*

Response: The DEC is not in possession of the detailed traffic models used to make predictions of traffic numbers and emissions before and after the tunnels opening. The DEC's focus in its assessment of the Cross City Tunnel Proposal was to ensure that:

- emissions from the tunnel exhaust stack would not result in adverse health and environmental impacts;
- worst case emissions from the tunnel exhaust stack were assessed; and
- sufficient information was provided to set in-stack emissions limits that would protect the health of the surrounding community.