Minutes of the

Mount Maunganui Air Quality Working Party

Hui held at Regional Council Chambers, Elizabeth Street

Thursday 11 November 2021

**Chair:** Graeme Marshall

**In attendance:** Councillor Matemoana McDonald, Councillor Paula Thompson (BOPRC); Commissioner Shadrach Rolleston, Commissioner Bill Wasley (TCC), Joel Ngatuere (Whareroa), Mark Hollands (Waste Management), Hayden Henry (Ngai Tukairangi); Julien Huteau (Ecocific); Dominic Adams, Beau Cowdrey-Woods (Ballance Agri-nutrients); Craig Duxfield, Jodie Langbien (Lawter); Kate Barry-Piceno, Nicole Smith (TMFAG); Bridget Robson (Eland); Cat Lochore (Toi Te Ora); Emma Jones, Heidi Hughes, Rosie Kelway (Clear the Air Mt Maunganui), Katherine Lay (MfE); David Ede, Sam Weiss (BoPRC)

**Guest Speakers:** Dr Chris Hill (EPA); Joey McKenzie/Dan Kneebone (Port of Tauranga); Mark Proctor (TPT/STIMBR); Kade McConville (Draslovka); Colin Maunder (Timberlands Limited)

**Support:** Sarah Omundsen, Jessica Somerville, Reece Irving (BoPRC); Barbara Dempsey (TCC)

**Apologies:** Kiri Peita, Lindsey Webber (WBPHO); Pete Chandler (DHB); Jim Miller (Toi Te Ora); Dudley Clemens (J. Swap Contractors); Ashley Hart (Lawter); Jo Gascoigne (MfE)

**Meeting Goals** - Gather information, maintain momentum, get answers and drive actions. Get clarity and visibility on issues and actions; hold those responsible for air quality to account. Continue to seek ways to work collaboratively.

**Opening Karakia** – Joel Ngatuere

**General Welcome / New Faces** – Graeme Marshall

**General Business**

**Formalities**

Minutes from previous two meetings accepted.

**Commissioner Rolleston**Update on outcomes of meeting of TCC, BoPRC and DHB and a brief over-view of future industrial zone planning in the TCC and WBOPDC districts.

**Update on social licence and monitoring work that Ballance is leading**:

* Two meetings have been held with the Mount Industrial Network and a subgroup has been created with more regular meetings scheduled to be held. This will help progress ideas sooner.
* At the first meeting, the wider group all agreed they wanted air quality to improve, acknowledged that a number of companies are taking some actions but more needs to be done. Also keen to share more stories about work that is being done by industry to improve air quality.
* The sub-group have been discussing ideas in more detail and are keen to understand more about air quality in residential areas.

**National Environmental Standards Air Quality (NESAQ) review and update.**

The NESAQ have been under review by the Ministry for the Environment. It was expected the review would have been completed and an updated NES released in the last quarter of 2021. This was expected to have clarified the intent and implementation of Regulation 17 regarding off-setting new or additional PM discharges in a polluted airshed and likely setting a standard for PM2.5. The review has now been delayed as MfE staff wait to see how the NES will be impacted by the release of the WHO guidelines and HAPANZ report in late 2021 and early 2022 respectively.

**Expansion Consent from Port of Tauranga Limited (POTL) and the impacts of MARPOL**

Whareroa requested regular updates on the expansion consent being processed for POTL and the obligations of the Port and shipping regarding NZ becoming a signatory of MARPOL Annex VI (air discharges from ships). They are concerned that discharges in general will increase with more shipping and port activity.

The POTL has reported that it has been almost 12 months since any PM10 NESAQ limits have been exceeded and linked to activities undertaken on POTL land, and is undertaking works to ensure they meet any new NESAQ standards in advance of them being released – working on an assumption there will be a lowering of PM10 limits and the introduction of a standard for PM2.5. There has been a significant drop recorded SO2 since 1 January 2020 when most international ships visiting New Zealand began operating on low sulphur fuels.

**RMA reforms**

Councils have been working through implications of the RMA reforms. For TCC, legislation changes will complicate the review of the Comprehensive City Plan, which is currently underway. The City Plan may be put on hold while reforms are in progress, but this is being analysed and discussed.

For the DHB to enact policy changes a strong evidence base around impacts to environment, economy and health is required. Undertaking health impacts studies has been discussed for some time however with the number of different agencies and people involved, the DHB requires more clarity on everyone’s individual roles and how they will work together to make the process faster and more efficient.

For Ngai Tukairangi, poor air quality is having cultural impacts and the results of monitoring showing air quality is generally improving does not match the lived experience of the community. Ngāi Tukairangi asked for more engagement and involvement in decision making processes and to be included in the discussion around air quality to ensure proper management.

**Presentations – The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Modified reassessment of methyl bromide (MeBr).**

**Speaker 1 EPA, Dr Chris Hill (Appendix 1: Presentation)***Methyl bromide reassessment decision and impacts on the future of methyl bromide use.*

When the EPA approves the use of a chemical in NZ, that approval is for the long-term. Reassessments can be done to review the approval, and are initiated by any person, including the CE of the EPA. The application for the MeBr reassessment was made by STIMBR specifically to reassess the recapture of MeBr, as industry groups have so far been unable to achieve current standards.

The presentation focussed on the reassessment process, lodging and acceptance of a reassessment application, the time-line and significant milestones that passed as a decision was achieved, and the submissions and hearings process.

Whilst the decision may seem complicated the new controls are very precise. The rates of recapture escalate over time to eventually achieve 100%. Additional controls are based around buffer distances, notification requirements etc. as well as the responsibilities for regulation and enforcement.

**Speaker 2 Port of Tauranga Limited (POTL), Dan Kneebone (Appendix 2: Presentation)**

Genera use MeBr at the Port of Tauranga to treat cargo and logs, the majority for logs export fumigation. Genera holds the discharge consent, POTL and regulators require Genera to show compliance with consent conditions. In 2017 there were about 240 tonnes of MeBr being applied per year. This has dropped to about 150 tonnes per year largely due to de-barking which POTL has incentivised.

**Speaker 3 TPT Forests Ltd / STIMBR, Mark Proctor – (**Mark addressed the meeting as a TPT Forests Ltd representative, not in his role with STIMBR).

*What the reassessment means for log exporters and expectations regarding the future use of methyl bromide.*

The recent outcome of the decision is a controversial issue. Logging has increased across the country, especially in the Bay of Plenty.

TPT Forests are interested in the practical pathway forward, to create solutions around MeBr use and complying with restrictions. If logs could be exported without being fumigated, that is what would be happening, however the issue is with the insects and other organisms that live under the bark of logs. For bio-security reasons importees do not want those bugs arriving alive in their home countries. This is what has been worked on with MeBr for the last 10 years, TPT has been balancing the conflicts between export volumes and reducing MeBr fumigation. The process towards MeBr reduction and 100% recapture technology has been delayed and disrupted, frustrating all agencies involved, industry and non-users alike.

The changes being implemented require a wider industry perspective, the research and science behind these changes takes time and must be extensive to cover all bases. It is considered that when these restrictions were put in place the challenge around the adjustments and time pressure were not considered. 10 years ago, NZ was exporting about 25 million cubic metres per annum. Half of that was processed in NZ and half exported overseas in log form. Ten years on the total volume is now closer to 35 million cubic meters. 11 to 13 million tonnes are still processed in NZ whereas around 20 million tonnes is being exported overseas. It is being looked at as to why more isn’t being processed here.

The two key markets which take that volume are China and India, both markets require logs to be fumigated; India accepts MeBr fumigated logs only. China accepts debarking and have indicated another product might be acceptable too. MeBr is only one tool in the toolbox and there are some countries who treat on arrival too, such as South Korea and Japan, but ultimately China takes 90% of our logs.

TPT have been trialling various alternatives but progress is not quick enough. Recapture technology is in place, trials to reduce MeBr concentrations are also in place. Other technologies for fumigation have been presented to both China and India, TPT are waiting to hear back on whether any other technologies are acceptable for export logs. There has also been significant investment in debarking which this has limitations such as there being a sufficient supply of logs near where the debarker is set up. Other pest treatment options such as heat are being explored, but have a long way to progress before they are efficient and can be used on a national level. If India does not approve alternatives there is the possibility of zero exporting to India in the future.

Debarking is not a fool proof system, if bugs are found to be hiding under bark, it will have negative repercussions on NZ log trade with China. Shipping logistics are also adding challenges at the moment. There are ship hold options, surface logs would need to be treated with an alternative product to MeBr. Although Tauranga has more options than some of the other NZ ports, there is a lot of work to be done in this area, especially with the changing legislation. Despite this, a large amount of progress in developing alternative technologies has been made.

**Speaker 4 Draslovka, Kade McConville (Appendix 3: Presentation)***Ethanedinitrile (EDN) as an alternative fumigant to methyl bromide and its pathway to future use in New Zealand*

An overview of Draslovka Services Group and where they are at with getting EDN through the regulatory processes for use in New Zealand. Currently EDN is registered for use in Australia, Malaysia, Korea and Russia.

EDN is currently used in log fumigations in ship holds and to treat weed and nematode and some insect pests on professional playing turfs such as golf courses, sports stadiums and bowling clubs.

Application for registration of EDN use in New Zealand began in 2016, supported by STIMBR. Several international organisations such as CSIRO Australia, USDA, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency in Korea and Plant and Food Research in New Zealand have recommended EDN as a suitable MeBr alternative fumigant. It generally appears less toxic to humans.

Draslovka has been in touch with BOPRC to understand how to get the relevant approvals and the processes that will need to happen to get EDN approved for use at the Port of Tauranga.

**Speaker 5, Timberlands Limited, Colin Maunder (Appendix 4: Presentation)**   
*The impact of debarking logs on the future of fumigation*

Timberlands manages Kaingaroa forest with 200 thousand hectares of forestry harvesting 4.7 million tonnes per year.

The export market is important as it provides a market for small/low grade logs which don’t have other markets. Our policy is to sell local first, but a number of different products come from one tree e.g. the bottom becomes 4 x 2 sawn timber and the smaller/worse grades go to places like Kinleith.

Timberlands debark to meet other countries’ import requirements. This an alternative to MeBr, which has been employed due to the restrictions made on MeBr. Not all markets will accept the treating of logs with Phosphine at sea, otherwise this could also be considered an alternative for Timberlands Ltd. Timberlands Ltd is aiming to be the best and safest production forest in the world, for that they must meet EPA requirements, so their future practices revolve around meeting regulation.

The log quality is critical to the success of debarking as an alternative to MeBr use, it is imperative that there cannot be any bugs hiding in logs that are exported to China. Timberlands assessment of the debarking process in contrast to MeBr use is that it can fully satisfy importer bio-security requirements and is a viable alternative. Currently only China will accept debarked logs without future fumigation being applied.

**Moving forward in 2022 – outcomes from the Working Party Survey.**

Most of the group want to continue, but feel that more action is required.

94% said the meetings were helpful. 72% said its somewhat achieving what the group set out to do.

One observation from the survey is that it appears not a lot of difference is being made to air quality. However, BoPRC monitoring shows that in relation to the national standards (not peoples living experiences) things are improving.

Respondents support having an independent chair for the meetings, and especially acknowledge the discussion and relationship opportunities that the Chair facilitates are beneficial to the process.

What is not working is the number of people attending (seen as too many), how we give people the opportunity to make comment and getting clarity on roles and responsibilities.

The Group want to develop an action plan that can be reported against.

A quick session to identify the key areas of reporting from each sector was held. The summary of this session is included as an Appendix, and a draft reporting template will be presented for approval at the next Working Party hui.

**Wrap up, next meeting**

**Close / karakia** - Joel Ngatuere

**Appendices – Presentations**

**Appendix 1: EPA, Dr Chris Hill***Methyl bromide reassessment decision and impacts on the future of methyl bromide use.*

**Appendix 2:** **Port of Tauranga Limited (POTL), Dan Kneebone**

**Appendix 3:** **Draslovka, Kade McConville***Ethanedinitrile (EDN) as an alternative fumigant to methyl bromide and its pathway to future use in New Zealand*

**Appendix 4: Timberlands Limited, Colin Maunder**  
*The impact of debarking logs on the future of fumigation*