

SUSTAINABILITY SPEAKING

No 17 Autumn 2015

North Botany Bay - largest cluster of Major Hazard Facilities in NSW



1 June 2013

Meadow Way Banksmeadow



12 July 2013

Caltex Banksmeadow



#Matrville | #FRNSW firefighters continue working hard to prevent flames spreading to adj. buildings. pic.twitter.com/eexl2lcSTj

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19 December 2013

Orora Matrville

Caltex faces \$2 million fine for petrol leak: October 16, 2014

"It is alleged that the discharge continued for around 80 minutes before a NSW Fire and Rescue officer waded through a pool of petrol to turn off the valve," the EPA said.

"There was a real possibility of an explosion if the leaking valve was not shut off," FRNSW Commissioner Greg Mullins said at the time of the award ceremony.

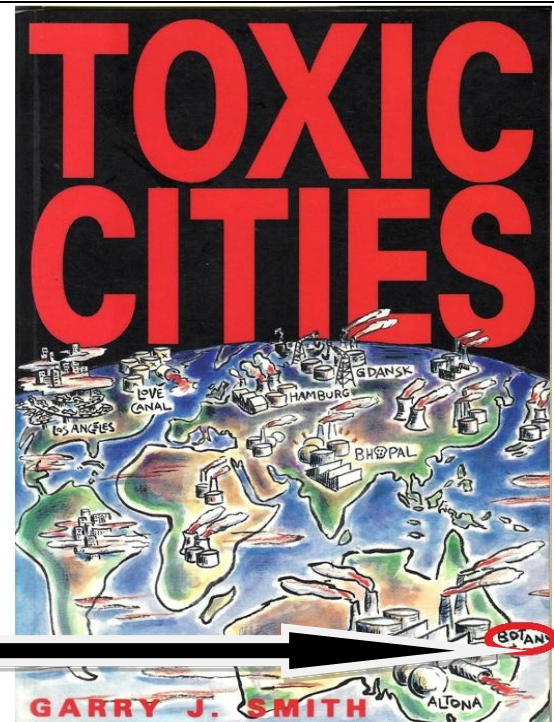
Resident account of Caltex spill: *"When the fuel leak happened back in July 2013 I heard the alarm at around 1.20am did not know what it was. It was very loud, unusual, usually it's the beeps clunks around the ports, container yards or incidents at Orica and surrounds. the loud noise of the siren could be heard all around Matrville, Chifley, La Perouse but we had no idea what was going on or what to do. I followed the sound of the noise with my car and once at Botany Road I saw the many many emergency services dealing with the incident from Botany Road..... I later heard what was going on through the radio 2GB. The Emergency Services are amazing but let's not take it for granted that people know what to do if something really bad, really serious happens."*

One of the 4 objectives of the State Emergency Plan, issued December 2012, emphasises **"community engagement in the development and exercise of plans as well as in their operational employment"**

and on the Emergency NSW Website:

"You should think about what sort of emergency you might be likely to face in your home, local community, workplace and the areas you regularly visit. This will help you best plan what you need to do, depending on the circumstances"

But how does a community prepare when those who are responsible for providing information about the cumulative risk refuse to share and educate?





"The most skilful use of 'smoke and mirrors' can disguise fundamental problems for no more than a limited period. In the end, there must be substance behind the promise - truth will undoubtedly out, regardless of any camouflage efforts by the most expert "spin" doctor. Management has to accept responsibility not only for the success or otherwise of the message but also for the facts behind it." (Former ICI Chief, Sir Denys Henderson. Henderson as chair of ICI oversaw the breakup of the company which included ICI Botany becoming Orica, Qenos and Huntsman)

ASSESSING THE RISK

The first study to assess the risk to residents on North Botany Bay was initiated in March 1980 by the NSW Department of Environment and Planning under Minister Eric Bedford. In the subsequent 1983 report (page 82) the authors provided estimates for a 'buy out' of those exposed to 'unacceptable risk'.

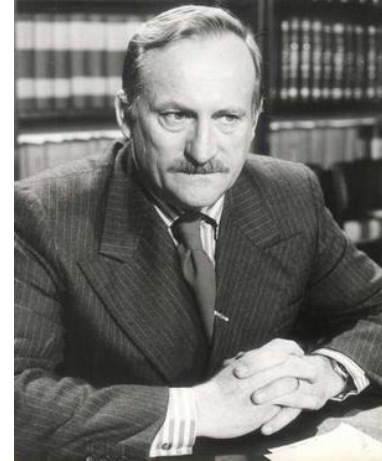
A.C.Hatrick: 55 single dwellings. Total estimated value: \$3,000,000

H.C.Sleigh: 202 dwellings (151 flats, 51 singles) Total estimated value: \$12,000,000 to \$19,000,000

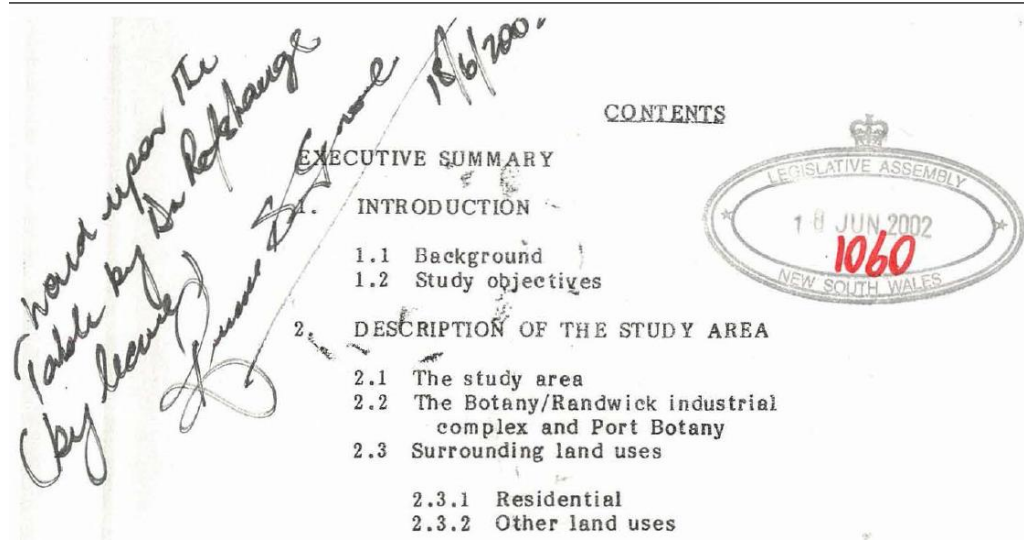
Total Oil Refinery: 470 dwellings (16 flats, 31 semis and 423 singles) Total estimated value: \$17,000,000 to \$29,000,000.

I.C.I.: 260 dwellings (169 flats, 44 semi-detached, 47 singles). Total estimated value: \$10,000,000

Amoco: 41 dwellings (11 flats, 4 semi-detached, 26 singles) Total estimated value: \$1,529,000



The report was not made public. Bob Carr became Minister in December 1984 and in 1985 *A Risk assessment study for the Botany/Randwick industrial complex and Port Botany*, a cut-down sanitised version of the 1983 report, was issued. It was not until June 16, 2002, in an ABC Background Briefing entitled "Chlorine Capers" that the public learned of the 1983 report. Two days after this exposure the then Minister for Urban Affairs, Dr Andrew Refshauge, tabled the report in Parliament and commented: "Experts of the day determined that hazard reduction – not forcing people out of their homes – was the best approach. History has confirmed that was the appropriate decision."



In his opening to Chlorine Capers, Steve Skinner, took a different view: "The Mayor, The Minister, the planner and the chlorine plant: a 20 year gamble by the authorities that nothing would happen, despite the risk of illness, injury, or death. Not only were more houses built, **but residents had no emergency training.**" Over those 20 years a number of significant chemical spills occurred. The most notable was Bhopal in December 1984 but there were also a number in Australia – Chester Hill in May 1989, Seven Hills in

December 1989, Coode Island in August 1991, Longford in September 1998 in addition to a series of incidents at Botany referred to by Richard Jones during the Legislative Council's debate on the Environmental Offences and Penalties Bill, 21/9/1989. In 1990 Human Health Risk expert Dr Garry Smith put Botany on the world map in his publication *Toxic Cities*.

THE GAMBLING CONTINUES

On September 1, 2011, a Disaster Sub Plan for North Botany Bay was released. The Plan won a CeBIT Award for Information and Communication Technology Excellence. Even so, the publicly available version contains no reference to community. This is in sharp contrast to the Sydney CBD and Lucas Heights Plans. The City of Sydney Council has a dedicated website – GetReadySydney.com.au

Since early 2012 there have been commitments given to engaging residents on North Botany Bay but this has not occurred. Over 2 years ago Orica and Qenos provided \$15,000 to develop an Emergency App but nothing has been done.

After the Meadow Way fire in June 2013 an extraordinary meeting of the committee concerned with Orica's HCB stockpile was held on 2 July 2013. The meeting was attended by emergency personnel from Police and Fire and Rescue NSW. Residents conveyed their concerns about threats to chemical operations as well as the HCB stockpile and the lack of information about major hazards. A meeting request was also sent to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mike Gallacher. Concerns outlined to the Minister included identification of hazards, cumulative risk assessment, risk education, emergency event preparedness, emergency event management and post event education. Follow up requests were sent and a response was received from a Parliamentary Secretary advising that the Minister was too busy. The incident in July 2013 at Caltex made no impression nor other events that followed at Orora and Qenos.



Polices on the management of major hazards very clearly outline the importance of community engagement.

I THINK WE MAY NEED TO
UPDATE OUR DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN.
THIS ONE SUGGESTS WE ALL RUN
AROUND IN CIRCLES SHOUTING
'WHAT DO WE DO?!!' 'WHAT DO WE DO?!!'



The *Hazardous Materials Plan* makes specific reference to developing relationships with community in Section 3, under Prevention 48: *Measures to prevent these types of emergencies or the escalation of an incident are a State priority requiring effective partnerships between agencies, governments, business, industry and the community.*

The *State Emergency Plan* clearly articulates the need for education and training.

602 Disaster preparation is the responsibility of the whole community..... Preparation activities delivered in partnership between all agencies, organisations and communities help build engaged and resilient communities.

603 Key elements of preparation include: planning; capability development; training exercises; building community resilience; risk communication.

Community education and awareness campaigns aim to:
develop awareness of the nature and potential impacts of hazards;
promote personal responsibility for managing risks and preparation for emergencies;
develop awareness of emergency management arrangements and assistance measures;
encourage community participation in volunteering and infrastructure protection activities.

Appeals have been made to responsible Ministers and the Secretary of Premier and Cabinet to 'walk the talk'. Responses, when provided, have not addressed the issues. The latest correspondence from Acting Deputy Secretary Sonja Stewart advises that there will be no more responses.

In Parliament, September 1989, Richard Jones suggested Ministers were 'snowed' by bureaucrats and aptly referred to **Yes Minister**.



Given that the Department of Premier and Cabinet can be of no further assistance to you I wish to advise that the Department will not respond to any future correspondence on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Stewart
A/Deputy Secretary

30 March 2015



While the extent of chemical operations has reduced since 1983, the movement of hazardous goods is increasing. Under the 2005 Conditions of Consent for the Port Expansion, a risk assessment, as part of an Environmental Impact Statement, would have been conducted when the trade cap at Port Botany was raised or removed. In 2012 the State Government legislated to void those conditions in the lead up to the 99 year lease of Port Botany, completed in 2013. Hence Port Botany will grow well beyond the environmentally assessed 3.2 million TEU. Aside from air quality impacts - ship and rail freight emissions are not regulated - that means more hazardous goods on more hazardous goods routes, without any cumulative risk assessment.

From the Sydney Morning Herald 1st December 2014:



Dangerous route: Denison street is frequented by trucks carrying chemicals to and from Botany Industrial Park.
Photo: Peter Rae

Huntsman."

"A "dangerous goods" transport study supposed to outline risks of fatality and injury from hazardous chemicals being trucked through the middle of Botany, has been criticised as "flawed" and unworkable. Dangerous goods including chlorine, explosives, LPG and petroleum are regularly transported along Denison Street to and from Port Botany, with some being taken in and out of the Botany Industrial Park which houses the chemical and plastics companies Orica, Qenos and

The Orica spill at Kooragang Island in August 2011 was the trigger for the *Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Act 2011*. Premier Barry O'Farrell speaking at the subsequent Parliamentary Inquiry into Orica on



21 November 2011 was adamant that public interest must be put first



and foremost, *we are determined [he said] to set some clear goals and to have our bureaucracy work to those goals, and of course, focus on outcomes. One of the issues that I think Mr O'Reilly correctly has elevated is one that has always concerned me, which is making sure that the public interest is front and centre of all they do... ..* It's time Premier Baird followed through on this commitment. Make the bureaucrats do their jobs. The Community, just like workers, have a right to know what risks they face and how to deal with them.
Lynda Newnam, April 2015