

17 March 2011

RESPONSE TO CITY NORTH NEWS ARTICLE 17 MARCH 2011

In response to the front page article in today's City North News, Thiess John Holland stated that project workers and local residents are not exposed to risks to their health from respirable crystalline silica as a result of construction activities.

The onsite and external monitoring results in conjunction with the site based controls in place, demonstrate that the projects meet all legislative safety requirements and ensure that project workforce, site visitors and the surrounding community are not exposed to risks to their health from respirable crystalline silica as a result of construction activities.

On Friday 11 March, City North News was offered a detailed briefing regarding the rigorous system of controls and monitoring regime implemented by Thiess John Holland.

City North News declined this offer, instead requesting a written statement responding to questions asked.

The statement below was provided in full to City North News in response to their enquiries.

Contrary to further allegations in the City North News article Thiess John Holland does not prevent any subcontractor talking to the media.

Media contact: Deirdre McCue, Manager Communications and Community Relations 0402 781 523

Statement provided to City North News 14 March 2011

The safety of our workforce and the surrounding community is a priority for Thiess John Holland (TJH) in the delivery of the Airport Link and Northern Busway projects.

Silica is a natural component of the rock being excavated in the construction of the Airport Link and Northern Busway projects. As the composition of the rock being excavated includes quartz, the respirable dust on the projects includes a component of respirable crystalline silica. However, due to the hardness of quartz relative to the other minerals in the rock, 'preferential splitting' at quartz grain boundaries often occurs during the excavation process. As a result the quartz itself is not fractured and the amount of fine quartz particles in the respirable range is reduced, meaning that respirable dust almost invariably contains a lower proportion of quartz than in the host rock.

To manage this risk in accordance with the Tunnelling Code of Practice 2007 and the Risk Management Code of Practice 2007, a hierarchy of engineering and administrative controls have been implemented across the projects and these are augmented by additional supplementary measures where required.

The focus of the controls is within the excavation zone, with the primary controls including ventilation systems to manage levels of dust in the tunnels, enclosed cabins on tunnelling machinery, dust suppression systems, cutterhead design on tunnelling equipment, dust scrubbers and tunnel wash downs. These controls are regularly inspected, audited and monitored for effectiveness.

Both Thiess and John Holland are tunnelling industry leaders within Australia and have been progressively developing and implementing new strategies to minimise dust generation on projects over the last 15 years. The knowledge and initiatives implemented by Thiess and John Holland over the last 15 years on the Melbourne City Link, Sydney Northside Storage Tunnel, Epping to Chatswood Rail Link, Lane Cove Tunnel, Melbourne EastLink and Boggo Road Busway in Brisbane have been implemented on the Airport Link and Northern Busway projects.

The monitoring regime in place across the projects includes personal and static monitoring within the worksites and external monitoring against the health based respirable limits imposed by the Co-ordinator General's requirements for the projects. The onsite monitoring results are reviewed by the projects' tunnel management teams in conjunction with other controls in place, discussed with area safety committees and the workforce, and posted on site noticeboards. All external air quality monitoring results are published on the project website in the monthly Environmental Monitoring Report.

The onsite and external monitoring results in conjunction with the site based controls in place, demonstrate that the projects meet all legislative safety requirements and ensure that project workforce, site visitors and the surrounding community are not exposed to risks to their health from respirable crystalline silica as a result of our construction activities.

ENDS