



6 March 2022

Getting Transmission Gully Motorway stormwater compliant is crucial say Harbour watchdogs

Ensuring Transmission Gully is meeting its stormwater and runoff consents prior to opening is crucial to preventing further damage to the health of Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour, according to the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchments Community Trust and the Guardians of the Pāuatahanui Inlet.

“Increased sedimentation flows into the harbour over the construction period have done irreversible damage to the shallow estuaries,” said Michael Player, Chair of the Harbour Trust.

“Between the start of construction in 2014 and the middle of last year there were 255 incidents of varying severity where the TGM contractors failed to maintain or manage the required environmental controls.

“Things got so bad that the Regional Council took the road builders to court. The puny fine of \$70K paled into comparison to even a single day of costs or penalties associated with the road building contract. But the blistering comments of Judge Dwyer in his judgement should have left no-one in any doubt about the significance of the damage done.

“The Judge stressed the national importance of the protection of the harbour’s twin arms and particularly the inlet. He said: ‘The potential for the inlets to be adversely affected by sediment and pollution generated by earthworks undertaken as part of the Transmission Gully project was well recognised when resource consents for the project were granted. It is incumbent upon those undertaking work on the project to do so in a manner which avoids sediment discharges within the catchment to the greatest extent possible.’

“Anyone who lives near the harbour can see the damage being done every time it rains – the water turns filthy brown from sediment plumes and the pollution takes days to settle or flush.

“Monitoring reports from the Greater Wellington Regional Council show that a surge in muddy sediment deposition is not only growing the inter-tidal mudflats but is filling in the deeper basins of both arms of the harbour. The reports make dismal reading.

“Stopping sediments reaching the harbour is the best weapon we have in restoring harbour health.”

“The extensive plantings along the 27-kilometre corridor of TGM once fully grown will be a huge asset in terms of preventing erosion. Until then we are highly dependent on storm water treatment systems being thoroughly tested before the motorway opens and working as planned and consented,” said Michael Player.

“As bad as it is, TGM is not the end of earthworks problems affecting the catchments and the harbour,” said Lindsay Gow, Chairperson of the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet.

“Extensive housing developments likely to take place on the northern side of the Inlet along with a planned industrial area at Judgeford pose ongoing risks to the harbour from sediment deposition and related pollution affecting harbour life. The world class Taupo Swamp is also threatened.”

“To reduce these risks all developments must be managed with considerable care. They also need close monitoring and prompt enforcement if consent requirements are to be met. We’ve been advocating for water sensitive design controls with some success. Reducing and treating stormwater flows through swales and wetlands lowers damage to the harbour and provides a better living environment. And, if designed at the outset of developments, it should reduce costs, too.”

“We’ll continue to look at how developers who might talk a big game actually perform when construction starts. The Transmission Gully Motorway construction certainly hasn’t been a role model to follow,” said Mr Gow.

Michael Player
Chairperson Te Awarua o Porirua Harbour
And Catchments Community Trust
phacctsec@gmail.com

Lindsay Gow
Chairperson
Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet
pauainlet@gmail.com