Monica Redden Consultancy

Case Study : Northside Storage Tunnel

Sydney WATER

About the project

The Northside Storage Tunnel is a 20 kilometre-long tunnel designed to capture wet weather overflows in the north shore area of Sydney, and to reduce the volume of polluted water flowing into the iconic Sydney Harbour. The $465 million construction project to build the tunnel was the first public/private alliance undertaken by the NSW Government. The aim was to create 500 million litres of storage capacity for Sydney Water, before the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000.

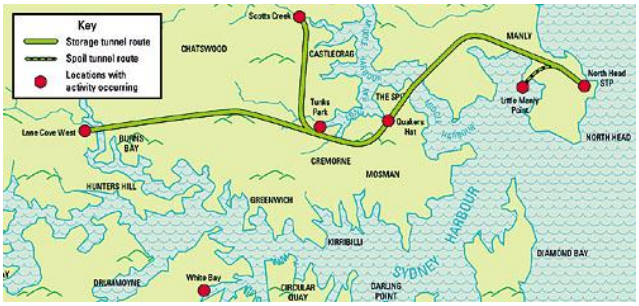

Diagram of Northern Storage Tunnel

Monica Redden Consultancy was part of the team engaged to manage community consultation during construction.

The challenge

Building the tunnel was one of the most contentious construction projects ever attempted in Sydney. The project was high profile and the construction work was extensive in scale, with boring and building work happening at five different locations; tunnel spoil being removed via road, barge and rail transport; and permanent structures such as air vents being installed to service the tunnel.

Local communities were politically astute and vocal in their questioning and at times opposition to the project and its impact.

Our approach

Monica Redden Consultancy worked with the consultation team to design and implement an innovative approach to engaging with the local communities. This involved organising and facilitating community advisory committees at sites affected by the project, organising public forums and events to increase awareness, and developing a comprehensive contact database to record engagement activities and ensure community feedback was recorded and taken into account. The role also involved working closely with the technical team and key stakeholders such as the Sydney Port Authority.

The results

The project set new benchmarks in community relations, and is widely recognised for successfully shifting the traditional approaches used in construction projects to include community considerations. An external audit found the way the community was engaged was outstanding, with community input influencing design, and helping to save costs and reduce environmental impact.

The tunnel was completed on time. Since it commenced operation in 2000, it has prevented more than 18.5 billion litres of untreated wet weather overflows from entering Sydney Harbour.

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