

# Waste fight off

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council has withdrawn its legal fight against a controversial waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South.

Despite its previously declared 'strong opposition', the council settled with the Environment Protection Authority and the plant's proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies ahead of an appeal hearing at VCAT on 1 February.

The plant is expected to burn 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Councillors endorsed the council's withdrawal in a recent closed briefing from council officers.

They were advised the council was unlikely to win its appeal against the EPA's works approval for the project, and faced a potential legal bill of up to \$700,000 including GSWT's costs.

"After extensive work by Council's environmental experts and lawyers and following a conclave which was held between both parties' expert consultants and EPA officers, it was established that the proposal meets the required relevant EPA legislation," city planning director Jody Bosman said.

"Additional conditions requested by council's lawyers are being added to the EPA Works Approval and have been agreed to in principle by the EPA.

"The settlement ends the prospects of Council incurring substantial costs in proceeding to a VCAT hearing and any claims in the absence of such settlement.

"VCAT have now confirmed the settlement in its Orders issued yesterday."

The project is sited at 80 Ordish Road in

Dandenong's industrial two zone - the home to the most offensive industries.

However it has drawn ire from residential estates and several schools within five kilometres away.

A "very disappointed" councillor Jim Memeti said residents in Dandenong South and Keysborough South were "sick and tired" of living near "hazardous industries".

"How many more of these hazardous waste facilities will be built? After this waste to energy facility, what's next?

"That's why the state government needs to rezone (the area) as quickly as possible."

In 2020, Cr Memeti successfully moved for the council to campaign for the removal of the industrial two zone.

The council is arguing to cease future hazardous industries in the zone but allow existing heavy industry to continue.

Great Southern Waste Technologies director Bill Keating welcomed the "positive outcome" after an "expensive" legal battle.

"The council had their experts have a look at it.

"It was a case that they were then happy to withdraw from this."

In the out-of-court settlement, the council bore some of GSWT's legal costs.

GSWT also agreed to a further "minor" condition as part of the EPA works approval for the plant, Mr Keating said.

He said construction was at least 12 months away until the plant's detailed design was finalised.

A viable, ongoing supply of waste also needed to be secured prior to works, Mr Keating said.

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# Council quits fight against waste plant

parts" were building "as strong a case as it can".

The team included "experts, lawyers and a barrister to defend Council's opposition to the Works Approval at the tribunal".

The EPA stated that it made minor amendments to the works approval's assessment conditions.

The amended conditions specify agreed methods for future studies.

"EPA believes these changes will reassure Council and the community that possible emissions should pose a low risk to environment and human health."

how it manages these facilities to protect the environment."

Over the past year, the council has stated it was "strongly opposed" against the plant, describing its fight as "one of the most significant VCAT planning appeals" that the council had pursued.

In a separate legal battle in September 2020, VCAT ruled in favour of a planning permit for the plant despite the council's opposition.

The council separately appealed against the EPA's works approval for the project. It stated at the time that its "team of ex-

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"The waste material were processing has to be assessed, audited and analysed so we know what's in it. And we can't do that without knowing where it's coming from.

"We have to know that before we construct."

He said it was "in our interest" to process only compliant waste - so to not void the plant equipment's warranty or create an "emission risk".

Mr Keating said the community should trust the EPA's regulation of the project. "The message is to rely on the EPA and

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# Incinerator creates a stir

The controversial waste-to-energy plant mooted for Dandenong South created news throughout 2020.

On 25 February the Star Journal reported that the proposal had been met by an overwhelming public backlash from hundreds of residents over air quality and health concerns.

Residents - as close as 1.4 kilometres from the plant - wrote letters and signed petitions, decrying the 70 Ordish Road site's proximity to Dandenong Creek, schools, colleges, kindergartens, places of worship and homes.

A 280-signature petition's covering letter stated homes were already impacted by two waste-related facilities, an organics garden and a commercial and industrial waste facility.

"Local residents have already made numerous complaints and reports to local council and EPA regarding the weird smells around our area.

"This (waste-to-energy plant) will definitely make the situation worse."

A Keysborough South resident wrote that the proposal would "literally shatter mine and so many other families' dreams".

"How can our kids still go to the local parks where there is air pollution, weird smells?"

In May Greater Dandenong councillors voted to oppose a VCAT planning permit application for the incinerator.

They unanimously rejected a council planning officer's report recommending support for the Great Southern Waste Technologies proposal at the VCAT hearing on 27 July.

In a motion at a 11 May council meeting, Cr Matthew Kirwan said it was the "only responsible decision" given public concerns and that the Environment Protection Authority had not yet assessed the human health and environmental impacts.

On 21 May the state's pollution watchdog



Great Southern Waste Technologies executive general manager Stuart Gilbert and chief operating officer Bill Keating with the proposed waste-to-energy plant.

Environment Protection Authority Victoria publicly released the further information.

As requested, proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies provided more information including emissions rates, odour impacts and accidental or emergency emission releases.

The incinerator would annually process 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial waste.

It would generate about 7.9 MegaWatts of power into the grid - suffice for about 7000 homes and businesses.

GSWT submitted that the plant's "clean" gasification technology met European Union standards and would have negligible impact on human health.

On 28 July the Journal reported that the plant

had been granted works approval by the EPA.

The applicant Great Southern Waste Technologies was granted approval for the 70 Ordish Road gasification incinerator with "stringent conditions", according to an EPA statement on 21 July.

The project still required planning approval - a matter which will be heard at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on 27 July.

In its findings, the EPA stated the "potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health".

Greater Dandenong Council then sought to defer the VCAT hearing. VCAT refused the council's request, but granted the council two weeks to submit further opposing arguments against the plant.

Mayor Jim Memeti said the council "vigorously" opposed the plant on behalf of residents during the four-day VCAT hearing.

Just weeks later, VCAT granted a planning permit on 15 September.

VCAT members Jeanette Rickards and Greg Sharpley stated the proposed waste-to-energy facility will "go some way to reducing waste to go to landfill".

"We do not consider that the use will impact on the amenity of the nearby local community," they stated - noting the Environment Protection Authority Victoria had granted works approval.

Greater Dandenong appealed the approval with a hearing expected in February.

# 'Dismal' defence

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A residents group has slammed City of Greater Dandenong's failed attempt to oppose a controversial waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal granted a planning permit on 15 September after the council had approved, then rescinded, deferred and finally opposed the project.

Since November, the project has attracted public outrage, with homes as close as 800 metres from the site. A coalition of schools, residents and community centres in Keysborough within five kilometres have objected.

The gasification facility with two 55-metre chimneys will process 100,000 tonnes a year of household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste, producing 7.9MW of electricity.

The South East Environment Group (SEEG), led by council election candidate Ramy El-Sukkari, claimed the council's case was hindered by tardiness and unprofessionalism.

He said the council only made a "token gesture" to oppose the "toxic incinerator" after a "relentless community campaign".

"It appears that the council decision was made only to appease the public outrage.

"The VCAT report demonstrates the dismal failure of the council (to take) the necessary steps to stop the incinerator application in a timely, genuine and professional manner.

"There were no serious measures in place to ensure that scientific and factual evidence were established to support ... the council position."

Mr El-Sukkari said VCAT "failed" residents by allowing 3000 tonnes a year of "toxic" fly ash to be stored in an on-site silo as prescribed industrial waste.

The plant's "exceptionally toxic and hazardous" bottom ash would be sent to landfill "without (VCAT) worrying about its harmful impact".

VCAT members Jeanette Rickards and Greg Sharpley stated the proposed waste-to-energy facility will "go some way to reducing waste to go to landfill".

"We do not consider that the use will im-

pact on the amenity of the nearby local community," they stated - noting the Environment Protection Authority Victoria had granted works approval.

The site is on the western edge of the "suitable" Industrial 2 zone - a zone that is typically more than 1500 metres from residences.

Nearby are a clinical waste incinerator, a resource recovery facility and a transfer station.

"We consider that the general issues of potential impact on the amenity of the area such as traffic, noise, odour, light spill and litter are issues that have already been fully explored during the Works Approval."

The council's argument that it had insufficient time to assess and advise VCAT on the plant's air emissions was "unsatisfactory".

"Despite raising this issue no details were provided by the council as to why it was concerned."

In its works approval findings in July, the EPA stated the "potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health".

The proposed air emission, odour and noise pollution controls were "consistent with international best practice standards of the European Union".

The EPA found that the plant's distance from residents and Mt Hira College was "acceptable".

Greater Dandenong mayor Jim Memeti said the decision highlighted the need to relocate the Industrial 2 zone.

Thousands of residents living in Dandenong South and Keysborough South were impacted by the zone's heavy industries despite a supposed 1.5-kilometre buffer, he said.

"I'm disappointed that VCAT have come to this decision," Cr Memeti said. "I'm concerned about the health of the community."

Cr Memeti will seek a health survey of Dandenong South and Keysborough South residents, suspecting higher-than-average rates of disease, severe disabilities at birth and infertility. A 2011 survey by the Department of Health found no disease cluster.

Greater Dandenong has appealed the approval with a hearing expected in February.

# VCAT goes ahead with waste hearing

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council has failed in its quest to defer a VCAT planning hearing into a waste-to-energy incinerator in 70 Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

At the tribunal on 27 July, the council requested more time to “consider the outcomes of and reasons for” an EPA works approval of the project.

The EPA's report had been released just six days before the hearing.

VCAT refused the council's request, but granted the council two weeks to submit further opposing arguments against the plant.

The proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies will be then given two weeks to respond.

Mayor Jim Memeti said the council “vigorously” opposed the plant on behalf of residents during the four-day VCAT hearing.

“The council and the community is very concerned about this incinerator.

“We've received 100 messages of the same type from current residents (since the EPA works approval).”

The Keysborough-based South East Environmental Group has also made written submissions against the plant.

SEEG spokesperson Ramy El-Sukkari said the group were worried about human health and pollution risks, especially with schools and homes as close as 800 metres away.

Mr El-Sukkari said residents had little confidence in the EPA enforcing pollution controls.

The EPA had failed to locate the culprit, let alone resolved a long-standing “nasty” “uncomfortable” stench emanating from Dandenong South's heavy industrial zone, he said.

In late 2019, the council deferred making a planning decision until the EPA's assessment.

In the meantime, Great Southern Waste Technologies referred the matter to the cur-



South Eastern Environmental Group president Ramy El-Sukkari has argued a Dandenong South waste-to-energy project is too close to schools and residents.

rent VCAT hearing, due to the council failing to decide the matter within the statutory 60-day limit.

Mr El-Sukkari called on the council to “redeem itself” by also appealing the EPA's decision in a separate VCAT case.

“It would show the residents that the council is taking it seriously rather than paying lip-service.”

Great Southern Waste Technologies has long defended the plant's environmental impact.

Its chief operating officer Bill Keating has pointed to the plant producing less greenhouse gas than equivalent landfill emissions.

“We're not there to cause harm. We're out there to cause benefit in terms of the actual amount of pollution,” he told Star Journal in April.

“We're not belching out smoke or toxic

chemicals - it's illegal to do that. The EPA just won't allow that to happen.”

In its findings, the EPA stated there was adequate separation from homes, schools and community facilities.

The “potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health”, it stated.

The proposed air emission, odour and noise pollution controls were “consistent with international best practice standards of the European Union”.

The plant would process 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Municipal household waste, which would be diverted from landfill, was estimated to make up 80 per cent of the feeder material.

VCAT is expected to decide the case by early September.

# Second hearing on plant

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council will lodge an appeal against the EPA's approval of a proposed waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

The council announced it will lodge its intentions to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal before the 10 August deadline.

It will be the second VCAT hearing on the controversial project, following a planning permit hearing in July.

In the earlier hearing, the council also opposed the Great Southern Waste Technologies (GSWT) facility.

In a public statement, the council said it

remained "strongly opposed" to the proposal and the EPA's works approval.

"Council is again using its legal representatives and is already undertaking further investigative work and obtaining expert advice in this regard."

Cr Matthew Kirwan said councillors unanimously authorised the appeal's lodgement as a preliminary step.

Queries, including the appeal's cost, would be worked out in coming weeks, he said.

There was also discussion on what technical arguments could be raised against the EPA's assessment.

In his own investigation, Cr Kirwan said he had "serious doubts" on the claimed green-

house gas savings compared to burying waste in landfill.

He said the EPA assessment compared the facility's emissions to landfills where biogas wasn't collected. However, biogas was extracted from most landfills in Melbourne, he said.

The EPA "downplayed" the impact of dioxins emitted by the plant.

A small amount of dioxin was "highly toxic, lasts for years in the environment and accumulates in the food chain".

According to GSWT, the facility would emit dioxins at a level below European Union environmental standards. A spokesperson said the EPA works approval was granted after a "detailed process" and "thorough examination".

"However if Council wishes to raise any issues with the EPA that is a matter for Council."

The plant would process 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Municipal household waste, which would be diverted from landfill, was estimated to make up 80 per cent of the feeder material.

The project has been vigorously opposed by nearby residents, schools and community groups in Keysborough.

Greater Dandenong mayor Jim Memeti recently led a push for the council to lobby for the Dandenong South heavy industry zone to be shifted out of metro Melbourne.

# Call for industrial rethink

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong mayor Jim Memeti says the council's industrial-2 zone for the most hazardous industries should be moved out of residential suburbs.

His comments come after a controversial waste-to-energy plant in the Dandenong South zone was granted works approval by the Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

The plant - which was assessed as posing "negligible" health risks - will incinerate 100,000 tonnes of waste a year within 1.4 kilometres of Mt Hira College, 800 metres from homes and 150 metres from Dandenong Creek.

The separation distance was assessed as acceptable by the EPA despite a mandated 1.5-kilometre buffer between the industrial-2 zone and homes, schools and other sensitive uses.

Within five kilometres are two primary schools, two colleges, three kindergartens and a maternal and child health centre.

The EPA found "highly conservative" modelling showed "negligible" health risks, and dust emissions within acceptable limits.

Cr Memeti said he shared residents' concerns about the plant's location.

"It's too close to the Mt Hira school and the residents in the Keysborough South estates and Dandenong South.

"I think the State Government seriously needs to look at relocating the industrial-two zone out of Melbourne metro suburbs."

In the past, the Government has rejected calls from Greater Dandenong Council and residents to relocate a toxic-waste dump from Lyndhurst.

The Government argued it was too expensive to transport waste into regional areas, Cr Memeti said.



Greater Dandenong mayor Jim Memeti says the industrial-2 zone is too close to schools and homes in Keysborough and Dandenong South. 200886  
Picture: CAM LUCADOU-WELLS

"We have to weigh up how close we have these industries to people.

"When that industrial-two zone was mapped out, the population of Greater Dandenong was only 100,000.

"With the population growth, we probably shouldn't have allowed schools and residences to come so close.

"And we are now 165,000 people and still

growing - these are the concerns I have."

Cr Memeti wasn't sure of the impact of the EPA's decision on Greater Dandenong's opposition to the project at a planning hearing at VCAT on 27 July.

"I haven't yet read the EPA report, so I don't know."

He hoped VCAT would take into account the proximity of schools and homes.

Cr Maria Sampey, who led the council's resistance to the plant, said the EPA's support appeared a "done deal from the start".

"I'm just disappointed in them because they've never got back to (Greater Dandenong Council) about our concerns. And now they've made an announcement that there's not a problem."

In its findings, the EPA stated the "potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health".

The proposed air emission, odour and noise pollution controls were "consistent with international best practice standards of the European Union".

As part of "stringent conditions", proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies must monitor emissions such as particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls, volatile organic compounds, dioxins and furans.

It must also monitor carbon monoxide, mercury, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen fluoride and oxides of nitrogen emissions.

The plant would process 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Municipal household waste, which would be diverted from landfill, was estimated to make up 80 per cent of the feeder material.

The EPA's works approval is subject to an audit of the plant's final detailed design and meeting "world's best environmental practice standards".

The plant's air emission pollution controls must be "upgradable" to meet stricter emission limits in the future, according to the EPA's conditions.

Greater Dandenong city planning, design and amenity director Jody Bosman said there were no plans to move the industrial 2 zone.

# Experts join fight

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council says it will mount “significant” opposition to a proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South.

In a public statement, the council stated it engaged experts, lawyers and a specialist barrister to oppose the EPA’s works approval in an appeal hearing at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal in February.

A specialist firm was providing technical advice on air quality, noise, vibration, human health and environmental risk, waste classification and handling fly ash, the council stated.

“This is one of the most significant VCAT planning appeals Greater Dandenong has pursued and demonstrates Council’s commitment to ensuring the proposal is opposed.”

Greater Dandenong had initially sought an extension on VCAT’s deadline for submissions. It argued for more time “given the detailed and complex nature of this work”.

On 24 September, VCAT ruled against proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies’ bid for the appeal to be struck out without a hearing.

The council was granted a time extension until 5 October.

“These are great outcomes and Council’s team of experts continues to build as strong a case as it can in arguing for the Works Approval to be set aside by VCAT,” the council stated.

The works approval appeal follows VCAT approving a planning permit for the 70 Ordish Road facility on 15 September.

The decision drew sharp criticism from the



Greater Dandenong Council has defended its campaign against a waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road.

Keysborough-based South East Environmental Group (SEEG).

SEEG president and council election candidate Ramy El-Sukkari claimed the council’s case was hindered by tardiness and unprofessionalism.

He said the council’s “token gesture” had not to that stage included “scientific and factual evidence”.

In its statement after the hearing, the council noted VCAT’s comment that the council had only a week to review the EPA works approval before the planning permit matter.

VCAT’s reasons focused on the site being appropriately located in an industrial 2 zone and at a safe distance from “sensitive uses”.

The tribunal noted that the EPA had no concerns with odour, noise and emissions.

Since November, the project has attracted public outrage, with homes as close as 800 metres from the site.

The site is on the western edge of the “suitable” Industrial 2 zone - a zone that is typically more than 1500 metres from residences.

A coalition of schools, residents and community centres in Keysborough within five kilometres have objected.

The gasification facility with two 55-metre chimneys will process 100,000 tonnes a year of household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste, producing 7.9MW of electricity.

Nearby are a clinical waste incinerator, a resource recovery facility and a transfer station.

The VCAT appeal is expected to start in February.

# Lobby minister on unwanted project advocates Garad

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Public pressure should bear on the State Government to halt the proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South, says a council candidate.

Keysborough South Ward candidate Rhonda Garad called on the resident-based South East Environmental Group to lobby Planning Minister Richard Wynne to step in and revoke the EPA's works approval.

Ms Garad said SEEG led by ALP member and rival council candidate Ramy El-Sukkari should also call on the Government to ad-

dress its policy to allow for up to 85 per cent of household waste in "these incinerators".

"It's pointless to target the (Greater Dandenong) council when it's now come to the state government level."

The council has resisted calls from SEEG to appeal a VCAT planning permit approval to the Supreme Court. It stated there was no legal basis - that is, no mistake in law - to base an appeal.

Ms Garad said SEEG's lobbying for court action was therefore "futile" and "grandstanding".

"SEEG should get tremendous local sup-

port to petition Richard Wynne on the grounds that (the plant) doesn't have a social license to operate."

However, Mr El-Sukkari said the group had lobbied Mr Wynne as well as local state MPs on the issue.

"We've tried to reach out to everyone."

He said SEEG wanted to know if Greater Dandenong had engaged with the "appropriate experts" in deciding not to launch a Supreme Court appeal.

Candidate Stephen Fanous vowed to visit every resident's home to petition against the plant.

"With over 9000 people, it's going to have a lot of weight. We will exhaust all avenues."

Since late last year, there has been great community uproar from residents in Keysborough and Dandenong South against the Great Southern Waste Technologies project in Ordish Road.

The plant would process up to 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste.

Greater Dandenong Council has launched an appeal to VCAT against the EPA's works approval of the project. The hearing is scheduled for February 2021.

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# Supreme court ruled out

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By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council has ruled out a Supreme Court of Victoria challenge against a controversial waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South.

Acting city planning director Jamie Thorley said the council could only appeal the VCAT's recent permit approval for the 70 Ordish Road project on a point of law or if the decision was unlawful.

"These concerns have not been raised or identified by the council's lawyers," Mr Thorley told a council meeting on 28 October.

"No further action can be made on the planning permit."

The council however will appeal the Environment Protection Authority Victoria's works approval for the Great Southern Waste Technologies project. The hearing is set to start at VCAT in February 2021.



A design for the proposed waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

project, according to community-based South East Environmental Group.

"If successful, and with the best possible outcome, it may lead to imposing more conditions on the already-granted permit to build and operate the incinerator, based on numerous European examples," it stated.

"The only way to try to reverse the VCAT decision and to cancel the permit ... is for the Council or anyone else to appeal to the Supreme Court."

SEEG stated that the council's best "way out" was to propose a "safe eco-friendly alternative" such as anaerobic digestion technology.

In a public statement, the council stated it engaged experts, lawyers and a specialist barrister for the February appeal.

A specialist firm was providing technical advice on air quality, noise, vibration, human health and environmental risk, waste classification and handling fly ash, the council stated.

"This is one of the most significant VCAT planning appeals Greater Dandenong has pursued and demonstrates Council's commitment to ensuring the proposal is opposed."

The site is on the western edge of the "suitable" Industrial 2 zone - a zone that is typically more than 1500 metres from residences.

A coalition of schools, residents and community centres in Keyborough within five kilometres have objected.

In its findings, the EPA stated the "potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health."

The proposed air emission, odour and noise pollution controls were "consistent with international best practice standards of the European Union".

The EPA found that the plant's 1.4 kilometre distance from the closest residents and Mt Hira College was "acceptable".

The gasification facility with two 55-metre chimneys will process 100,000 tonnes a year of household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste, producing 7.9MW of electricity.

Nearby are a clinical waste incinerator, a resource recovery facility and a transfer station.

# Plant gets the nod

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A controversial waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South has been granted works approval by the state's pollution watchdog Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA).

The applicant Great Southern Waste Technologies was granted approval for the 70 Ordish Road gasification incinerator with "stringent conditions", according to an EPA statement on 21 July.

The project still requires planning approval - a matter which will be heard at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on 27 July.

GSWT is also required to apply for an EPA licence. In its findings, the EPA stated the "potential air emissions ... pose negligible risk to human health".

The proposed air emission, odour and noise pollution controls were "consistent with international best practice standards of the European Union".

The EPA found that the plant's 800-metre distance from the closest residents and 1.4 kilo-

metres from Mt Hira College was "acceptable".

The site is in an industrial 2 zone, the home to the most offensive industries.

Within five kilometres are two primary schools, two colleges, three kindergartens and a maternal and child health centre.

During the protracted nine-month approval process, GSWT was several times requested to supply more information to the EPA, including on the issue of emissions.

Schools and residents in Keysborough, including a 280-signature petition, strongly opposed the plant due to pollution and health concerns.

Keysborough resident Helen, of the South East Environment Group, said she was "shocked" by the EPA ruling.

"We saw the EPA were getting very cautious about the project."

GSWT director Bill Keating said that he was "pretty neutral" about the decision. He was unsure how it would impact on the upcoming VCAT case.

"We're just following processes and we'll see where that takes us."

The plant would process 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Municipal household waste, which would be diverted from landfill, was estimated to make up 80 per cent of the feeder material.

In June, GSWT missed the shortlist for a 16-council consortia's tender for advanced waste solutions.

The consortia included Greater Dandenong Council, which deferred a planning-permit decision on the plant until EPA had assessed the project.

The EPA's works approval is subject to an audit of the plant's final detailed design and meeting "world's best environmental practice standards".

The plant's air emission pollution controls must be "upgradable" to meet stricter emission limits in the future, according to the EPA's conditions.



KTICC board member Muhammed Sezgin and Mt Hira College chairperson Tugrul Usta stand against the proposed waste-to-energy plant.

## 'We deserve fresh air'

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Leaders of a Keysborough school and a cultural centre say their students and members will be endangered by an EPA-approved waste-to-energy plant.

Mt Hira College and Keysborough Turkish Islamic and Cultural Centre (KTICC) lie within the 1.5-kilometre buffer zone for the project in Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

KTICC board member Muhammed Sezgin said the EPA's works approval was a "big disappointment".

He said "many existing religious and cultural centres, schools" nearby would be impacted by air emissions and pollution.

"Our children deserve to live in a safe place and breathe fresh air."

The project would impact on KTICC's plans for facilities in the vicinity, such as an early learning centre, a function centre, a youth centre and aged care centre, Mr Sezgin said.

He hoped that VCAT, which will consider a planning permit for the plant, would "do

the right thing".

A "shocked" and "quite frankly disappointed" Mt Hira College chairperson Tugrul Usta said his school and a soon-to-open early learning centre were just 1.4 kilometres from the plant.

"This is worrying as you can imagine a building of this sort would have within a certain radius a negative impact on the air quality and consequently on human health."

Mr Usta noted the EPA's finding of "negligible" risk to human health.

"Regardless, it seems there is potential risk to human health.

"It is also important to note that local schools, residents and the Greater Dandenong Council all strongly oppose the construction of this incinerator in Dandenong South.

"Therefore, we hope VCAT will take into consideration the proximity of the schools and homes when deciding on the outcome of this project."

The VCAT hearing is scheduled to start on 27 July.

## Deferral plea put to VCAT

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council will seek deferral of a VCAT hearing on a proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South after the project won environmental approval.

The VCAT hearing, which will decide on whether to grant a planning permit for the facility at 70 Ordish Road, is set for Monday 27 July.

Only six days earlier, the state's pollution watchdog Environment Protection Authority Victoria granted works approval.

Greater Dandenong city planning, design and amenity director Jody Bosman said the council would seek "deferment" of the VCAT hearing.

It would "allow time for Council to consider the outcomes of and reasons for the EPA decision, and if that has any impact on the position of Council".

Mr Bosman said the council remained opposed to the plant.

"If a deferral is not granted, Council and its legal team are prepared to argue its case in opposition of the granting of a planning permit."

In late 2019, the council deferred making a planning decision until the EPA's assessment.

In the meantime, proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies referred the matter to VCAT, due to the council failing to decide the matter within the statutory 60-day limit.

Mayor Jim Memeti said he wasn't sure of the impact of the EPA's decision on Greater Dandenong's opposition to the project at VCAT.

He hoped VCAT would take into account the proximity of schools and homes, as close as 800 metres away.

Cupcakes for heroes on frontline



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Facing up to Covid



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School all smiles for 'mum run'




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Black Opium's Crown



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# Burn backlash

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong councillors have voted to oppose a VCAT planning permit application for a controversial waste-to-energy incinerator in Dandenong South.

They unanimously rejected a council planning officer's report recommending support for the Great Southern Waste Technologies proposal at the VCAT hearing on 27 July.

In a motion at a 11 May council meeting, Cr Matthew Kirwan said it was the "only responsible decision" given public concerns and that the Environment Protection Authority had not yet assessed the human health and environmental impacts.

"We have heard the legitimate and understandable concerns of residents loud and clear. The Covid-19 situation we are now in has heightened residents putting health first."

The council received 298 community objections and two petitions against the project at 70 Ordish Road. One submission was received in support. Objections include the plant being within 1.5 kilometres from a school and homes, ongoing odour issues, the plant's "old" technology and fire-safety emergency procedures.

The EPA made no objection to the planning application. It is expected to complete its assessment in June.

Cr Tim Dark said it would be "sheer lunacy" for the council to support the plant without obtaining "all the facts". Cr Maria Sampey was "disappointed" that the EPA had not yet addressed councillor and residents' concerns.

On the other hand, Greater Dandenong officers based their support on planning grounds - leaving the matters of environment and health impacts to the EPA's works approval assessment.

"In the view of officers, the combination of the number of submissions, and the grounds of concern provided do not justify establishing a

position of not supporting the application for the upcoming VCAT hearing."

The officers found that the plant's location was in an appropriate industry-2 zone for "offensive" industries - a "hub of waste related industries" and a State Significant Industrial Area.

Nearby were medical and pharmaceutical waste sites, a commercial and industrial waste station, a municipal waste transfer station and recycling resource recovery uses.

"It is considered that the proposal has been designed in an appropriate manner and one which is consistent with its context and will not raise unreasonable adverse planning-related amenity impacts."

The plant proponents Great Southern Waste Technologies is also awaiting works approval from state pollution watchdog, the Environment Protection Authority. After months of delays, the EPA states its assessment will be completed in June. Great Southern Waste Technologies states the plant would annually incinerate 100,000 tonnes of mainly domestic waste otherwise destined for landfill. It would hence reduce greenhouse gases.

Its "clean" gasification technology met European Union standards on emissions, GSWT claims. The plant would feed 7.9 MegaWatts of electricity into the grid, powering about 7000 homes and businesses.

In November, Greater Dandenong Council deferred its decision on the plant until the EPA assessed its impact. An EPA-hosted forum in March reported "great anxiety" due to the plant's proximity to residents, schools, aged care facilities, businesses and Dandenong Creek. In the meantime, Great Southern Waste applied for a planning permit hearing at VCAT due to the council failing to make a decision within the legislated timeframe.

VCAT required Greater Dandenong Council to state its support or opposition to the permit by 5 June.

# Details on plant's emissions impact

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

The proponent of a controversial waste-to-energy incinerator in Dandenong South has further elaborated on potential emissions and odours.

The state's pollution watchdog Environment Protection Authority Victoria publicly released the further information on Thursday 21 May.

Three months earlier, the EPA had requested extra information as part of assessing a works approval application for the plant.

It is expected to make its decision in late June.

As requested, proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies provided more information including emissions rates, odour impacts and accidental or emergency emission releases.

The incinerator would annually process 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial waste.

It would generate about 7.9 MegaWatts of power into the grid - suffice for about 7000 homes and businesses.

GSWT has submitted that the plant's "clean" gasification technology met European Union standards. It would have negligible impact on human health, it claims.

However, the project has attracted a wave of community objections - many concerned that the plant would be 1.4 kilometres from the closest residents and Mt Hira College.

Within five kilometres are two primary schools, two colleges, three kindergartens and



An illustration of the proposed waste-to-energy plant at 70 Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

a maternal and child health centre.

Objectors have also expressed fears of air pollution and odours cumulating on top of an existing stench from the industrial-2 zone.

Public submissions on the new information have re-opened until 5pm on 4 June.

Details: [engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals/GSWT](http://engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals/GSWT)

# Collective tender seeks waste solution

Greater Dandenong City Council, together with 15 other councils from Melbourne's south-east, have begun the first collective tender for advanced waste processing solutions.

This will result in household rubbish being processed instead of it being sent straight to landfill.

"This is the biggest tender for new waste management infrastructure ever undertaken by councils in Melbourne," Greater Dandenong Council Chief Executive Officer John Bennie said.

"Advanced waste processing will transform how the City of Greater Dandenong manages the rubbish we collect from residents."

Advanced waste processing technologies are being used successfully and safely overseas to recover valuable materials in household rubbish or transform it into energy.

These technologies can reduce the amount of household rubbish sent to landfill by at least 85 per cent and reduce residents' impact on the environment.

Population growth in the south-east is driving a substantial increase in rubbish.

Household rubbish in the 16 councils is projected to increase by 40 per cent over the next 25 years.

Rubbish will all go to landfill unless another solution is found.

The announcement of the tender comes as the EPA deliberates over a proposal for a waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, Dandenong South, which would process an estimated 100,000 tonnes a year of non-recyclable municipal solid waste, and commercial and industrial waste through incineration.

Hundreds of residents have expressed concern about the proposed plant, especially around smells, air quality and pollution.

Mr Bennie said landfills in the south-east are set to close in a few years, which means councils will have to transport rubbish across Melbourne to other landfills.

"Advanced waste processing is a great solution for household rubbish that would normally go to landfill.

"We still need to continue kerbside recycling and green and food waste collection ser-

[dandenong.starcommunity.com.au](http://dandenong.starcommunity.com.au)



Advanced waste processing solutions could reduce residents' impact on the environment.

VICES as part of a total approach to managing waste," Mr Bennie said.

"Advanced waste processing will do more with the valuable resources that are being put in landfill and achieve better financial, environmental and social outcomes."

The tender has started with an Expression of Interest to identify businesses with the right

experience and capability to design, build and operate a facility. It will take another two years before a preferred bid is selected.

No decisions have been made yet regarding the type or location of any facilities. This will be identified during the procurement process.

It is expected to be at least five to six years before a facility is operating.

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# Waste-to-energy anger

By Danielle Kutchel

A community conference on the proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South has been slammed as "insincere and meaningless" by City of Greater Dandenong councillor Matthew Kirwan.

Cr Kirwan and colleague Maria Sampey were among around 100 concerned residents who packed a council meeting room for the conference on Tuesday 3 March.

Those attending discussed some of the key issues to come out of the submissions that were made by the public in response to Great Southern Waste Technologies' proposal for a \$15 million plant at 70 Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

A total of 79 submissions were made in response to the proposal via the Engage Victoria website earlier this year; 76 raised concerns or directly objected to the proposal.

Cr Sampey told the Journal she was confused about the purpose of the conference.

"Why are they asking us to ask the questions?" she said.

"It isn't the people attending who are doing the investigation.

"What is the EPA going to achieve through this consultation?"

She said she had attended the event expecting to hear more information from the EPA regarding the similar use of the waste-to-energy technology in Europe.

"I wanted information, and they're not giving us information," she said.

Cr Kirwan said he too was disappointed with the way the evening had progressed, and suggested a better way of conducting the evening would have been to simply take questions from the floor.

There was no shortage of questions when the audience was given the microphone for a brief period prior to the meeting's end, with



Residents packed the room for the event.

attendees querying the age of the technology being introduced, the potential environmental impacts and emissions of the plant, the impacts on air quality and the chosen location.

"From the heart of a community member ... to the applicants, take the community concerns into your consideration and prioritise, and take a look at some of the failed cases around the world, not only the good case studies," one resident begged.

While not every question was given an answer or response on the night, the queries were recorded by the EPA.

Representatives of the EPA insisted on the night that there was "no rush" to get the project through, and that they would ensure prop-

er processes were followed and requirements met should the plant be approved.

Nadir Yildiz, head of college at Mt Hira College, said he was concerned about the effects of the plant on air quality and pollution, and about the possibility of the plant's software being hacked or manipulated.

"I'm sick of fighting these people," he said.

"Every time bad industry comes to Dandenong, we have to fight, and it's costing the community."

The proposed plant would be located approximately 1.5 kilometres away from the College and its 610 students.

Keysborough resident Helen said the loca-



Cr Kirwan and Cr Sampey were unimpressed with how the event played out.

tion should be "crossed out".

She and several other residents are mobilising as a group to continue fighting the proposal.

A spokesperson for the EPA said they appreciated the community's concern.

"The conference showed the high level of interest from the local community about the proposed waste to energy facility in Dandenong South," said EPA manager southern metro region Marleen Mathias.

"From here, an independent report will be produced and made available on the engage.vic.gov.au website.

"EPA will use all this information in its assessment of the Works Approval application to make a final decision."

According to its submission to the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, GSWT seeks to use gasification technology to process 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial waste each year.

It would generate 7.9 megawatts of electricity to be fed into the grid, enough to power about 7000 homes according to Great Southern, using technology from Norwegian company Energos.

# Something 'rotten' in Dandenong South industry zone

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A liquid organic waste company in Ordish Road, Dandenong South is taking on a state pollution order against alleged "rotten egg" smells wafting from its site.

Argus Recycling has been at the site next to Dandenong Creek since 1967. It sits just inside the border of Dandenong's increasingly notorious industrial 2 zone.

But the open-air compost yard has apparently got on the nose of its neighbours.

Nearby manufacturers and a shopfitting company are backing the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, which recently issued a Pollution Abatement Notice.

Argus Recycling is seeking a review of the PAN at an upcoming VCAT hearing.

The PAN states that Argus's activities caused or were likely to cause air pollution that was harmful or potentially harmful to human health, welfare, safety or property.

On inspection, EPA officers allegedly encountered "offensive odours" at the site.

A nearby business owner, who did not wish to be named, described the daily smell as "terrible" "rotten egg gases".

After decades of operation, Argus should update with new technologies to mitigate its pollution, the owner said.

"They're dumping rotten foods on the ground and letting it rot down. We've seen black plumes of smoke coming off.

"It's a daily occurrence. How bad it is depends on what way the wind is blowing."

The neighbour said Argus argues it has been carrying on without issues for decades until other businesses moved nearby.

"They say why should they change their process because people have moved closer?"

"They're saying it's an organic plant. But plenty of organic products can kill you - methane gas that comes off rubbish tips can kill you."



Argus Recycling in Ordish Road, Dandenong South is fighting an EPA Pollution Abatement Notice. 228758



SUEZ toxic waste dump in Lyndhurst is part of the industry 2 zone. 228738  
Pictures: GARY SISSONS

The industry two zone - home to the state's most offensive industries such as the Lyndhurst toxic waste dump - was established in 1976.

It has been steadily encroached by light industry, housing estates, sports fields and schools in Keysborough and Dandenong South.

Some homes are within the zone's supposed 1.5-kilometre buffer zone.

Thelma Wakelam is a member of Residents Against Toxic Waste in the South East (RATWISE), which opposed the Lyndhurst tip as well as a capped and lined mound (CaLM) of untreated polluted sludge on the corner of Greens Road and Eastlink.

She blames the council for not "speaking out" against homes and businesses creeping closer to heavy industry.

"It's just been so wrong for so long.

"Everybody has a human right to live in an area free from contamination. It's not a big ask."

Greater Dandenong Council city planning director Jody Bosman said the council was involved in "significant strategic work with the State Government and other authorities regarding the various developments surrounding this area to ensure they met the relevant legislation at the time of their development."

In the wake of a public outcry against an

approved waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, the council is exploring the possible rezoning of the area to light industry use.

Mr Bosman said the council was preparing a report on "current options".

Councillor Jim Memeti, who called for the report, recently said residents were "sick and tired" of living near toxic industries but were powerless to stop them due to the industrial 2 zone.

In July, a Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning spokesperson said there were "no plans to change the industrial zoning in Dandenong South".

Argus Recycling was contacted for comment.



An illustration of the proposed waste-to-energy plant in Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

# Waste-to-energy 'anxiety': forum

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

The proximity of a proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South is a "cause of great anxiety" to residents, schools, aged care facilities and businesses, the chair of a community forum has stated.

Jennifer Lilburn, of Kismet Forward, reported on the health and environmental objections raised by many of the 95 community members at the EPA section 20 conference in Dandenong on 3 March.

She recommended that the Environment Protection Authority's upcoming works-approval assessment of the 70 Ordish Road facility addresses the concerns.

Ms Lilburn stated she neither agreed or disagreed with the objections but recommended "plain English" EPA assessments on potential emissions, noise, odours and by-product disposal.

An air monitoring plan and a rationale for the "acceptable" 1.5-kilometre buffer from schools and homes was also recommended.

The plant would be 1.4 kilometres from the closest residents and Mt Hira College. Within five kilometres are two primary schools, two

colleges, three kindergartens and a maternal and child health centre.

"The location of the proposed waste to energy facility is a primary focus for many participants," Ms Lilburn stated.

"The proximity to residential areas, schools, aged care facilities and local businesses is a cause of great anxiety."

Despite the proponent's assurances, people feared contamination of Dandenong Creek, groundwater, recycled water supplies and the risk to residents and a plethora of native and migratory birds.

Another "anxiety" was air pollution comprising mercury, sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxides and dioxins, Ms Lilburn stated.

This would be potentially worsened by incorrect sorting of domestic waste fed into the plant, leading to poisonous materials being incinerated.

People were concerned about the unknown cumulative effect of the plant on top of an existing stench from the industrial-2 area, which was causing children to "vomit".

There was "suspicion" about the EPA and proponent Great Southern Waste Technolo-

gies' ability to manage and monitor the impacts, as well as distrust of the plant's technology, Ms Lilburn reported.

"There was also a belief that other countries are moving away from waste to energy and that it is a retrograde step for Australia to consider it when cleaner, more efficient energy generation methods are available."

Where applicable, the EPA should engage the "precautionary principle" if health and environmental impacts were unknown, Ms Lilburn stated.

If the plant was approved, the EPA should ensure complaints and air quality were monitored, and breaches enforced.

Great Southern Waste Technologies states the plant would annually incinerate 100,000 tonnes of mainly domestic waste otherwise destined for landfill. It would hence reduce greenhouse gases.

Its "clean" gasification technology met European Union standards on emissions, GSWT claims.

The plant would feed 7.9 MegaWatts of electricity into the grid, powering about 7000 homes and businesses.

## Waste plant 'not well understood'

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A Dandenong South waste-to-energy proponent will submit its interest in a 16-council consortia's tender process for advanced waste solutions in Melbourne's South East.

Great Southern Waste Technologies will propose its controversial site at 70 Ordish Road, which has been overwhelmingly opposed by schools and residents in neighbouring Keysborough.

The consortia's South East Metropolitan Advanced Waste Processing Procurement process is being led by the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group. The group includes Greater Dandenong Council.

"I don't think the proposal is understood yet by the local residents," GSWT chief operating officer Bill Keating said of the heated community objections.

"We're not there to cause harm. We're out there to cause benefit in terms of the actual amount of pollution.

"We're not belching out smoke or toxic chemicals - it's illegal to do that. The EPA just won't allow that to happen."

Compared to the waste going to landfill, the plant would be "environmentally positive" and a "better solution".

It would result in less carbon-dioxide emissions and groundwater contamination than dumping waste at the tip.

Mr Keating acknowledged strong community objections to emissions and ground-level concentrations and how they will be measured.

It was wrongly reported that about three per cent of the waste will be emitted as fly-ash, Mr Keating said. It would be captured in a bag filter within the plant, rather than expelled into the atmosphere.

Particulate-matter air emissions would be "near zero", he said.

"We have to be below that 10-parts-per-million (threshold) - and we are."

The tender process isn't expected until later this year, with the impact of Covid-19 an unknown obstruction.

Greater Dandenong is among the 16 councils that are part of the South-East advanced-waste consortia. It delayed a decision on a building works permit for the GSWT proposal.

With the 60-day statutory time limit expired, GWST has lodged for the permit to be heard at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

GWST is also awaiting approval from Environment Protection Agency Victoria (EPA).

The 1.27-hectare site at Ordish Road is in an industrial 2 zone identified by the State Government as a waste and recovery hub of state importance, the proponent argues.

The plant will process 100,000 tonnes of waste, mainly from households, that would otherwise go to landfill.

It would generate about 7.9 MegaWatts of power into the grid - suffice for about 7000 homes and businesses.

Mr Keating said the technology had been "well proven" in Europe, easily meeting European Union emissions standards.

The plant would employ 30 workers with a further 30 indirect jobs, Mr Keating said.



Great Southern Waste Technologies executive general manager Stuart Gilbert and chief operating officer Bill Keating with the proposed waste-to-energy plant. 207210  
Picture: CAM LUCADOU-WELLS

# Incinerator: 'Death of a thousand cuts'

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Environment Victoria has weighed in with calls for an "urgent moratorium" on approvals for the state's first waste-to-energy plants such as the proposal for Dandenong South.

The environment lobby group's open letter to state MPs and councillors claims the incinerators would produce "tens of thousands of tonnes of hazardous ... ash each and every year".

"Waste-to-energy incinerators are more polluting than coal and gas-fired power stations for energy output."

Campaigns manager Nicholas Aberle dismissed claims that the 70 Ordish Road incinerator would produce less greenhouse-gas emissions than burying waste in landfill.

"From a climate perspective, it is not clean technology.

"You can do other things like properly treating organics and creating compost, which wouldn't have the associated emissions."

The plant will process 100,000 tonnes of waste, mainly from households, that would otherwise go to landfill.

It would generate about 7.9 MegaWatts of power into the grid - suffice for about 7000 homes and businesses.

Even if the incinerator produces less greenhouse gas per MegaWatt hour than brown coal-fired energy, it wasn't a "long-term fix" compared to zero-emission renewables, Dr Aberle said.

"I'm not convinced it's the best option for creating electricity.

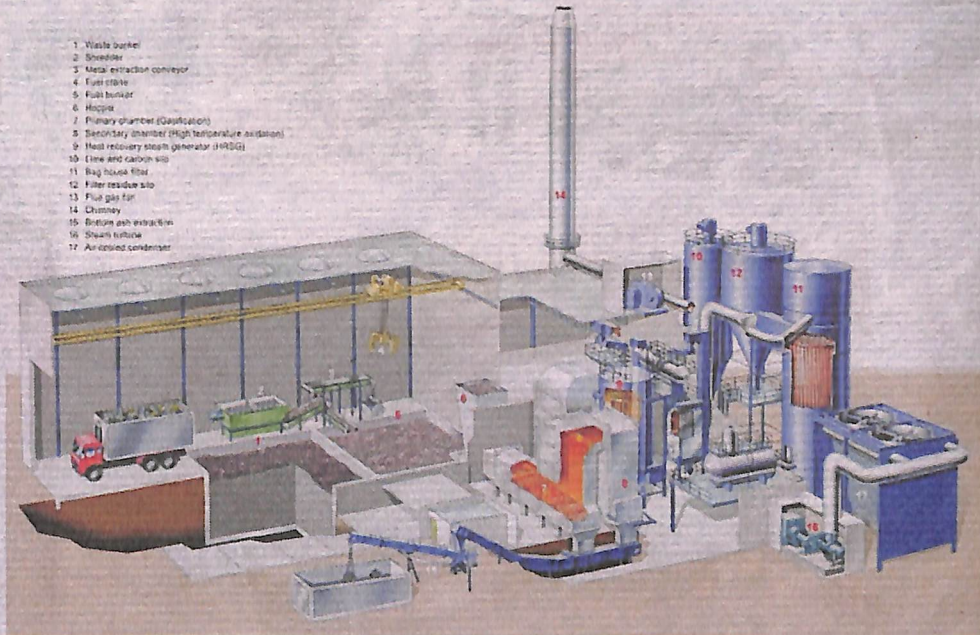
"With every little bit of emissions, you're really contributing to the problem.

"It's the death of a thousand cuts."

Dr Aberle said the plants would create a disincentive for recycling and the "circular economy" of reusing existing materials.

He warned councils could be locked into long-term contracts to supply large quantities to the plant, and hence put recycling projects on the back-burner.

"Those incinerators will be hungry to gobble up whatever waste they can get their hands on."



The plant's proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies is applying for a planning permit at VCAT and works approval by the EPA - while being overwhelmingly opposed by schools and residents in neighbouring Keysborough.

It has also submitted its interest in a 16-council consortia's tender process for advanced waste solutions in Melbourne's South East.

The consortia's South East Metropolitan Advanced Waste Processing Procurement process is being led by the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group.

The group includes Greater Dandenong Council, which is opposing GSWT's permit application.

GSWT chief operating officer Bill Keating has told Star Journal that the technology had been "well proven" in Europe, easily meeting European Union emissions standards.

"I don't think the proposal is understood yet by the local residents," GSWT chief operat-

ing officer Bill Keating said of the heated community objections.

"We're not there to cause harm. We're out there to cause benefit in terms of the actual amount of pollution.

"We're not belching out smoke or toxic chemicals - it's illegal to do that. The EPA just won't allow that to happen."

Particulate-matter air emissions would be "near zero", he said.

"We have to be below that 10-parts-per-million (threshold) - and we are."

In GSWT's submission to the EPA, it argues that the plant will save 137,000 tonnes of carbon-dioxide-equivalent emissions by diverting waste from landfill.

The plant would generate about 59,800 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions - about 9300 tonnes more than "an equivalent amount of average electricity produced in the National Electricity Market".

# Haste on waste

P. 10 Dec  
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**By Cam Lucadou-Wells and Taylah Eastwell**

Critics have slammed a short public submission period for a waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South ending soon after the Christmas-New Year holiday period.

The formal application for the facility at 70 Ordish Road was released to the public on 3 December by the state pollution regulator, the Environmental Protection Authority Victoria.

The EPA Victoria set a closure for public submissions at 8 January 2020.

The regulator is still to assess the application by proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies. It also awaits a building permit from Greater Dandenong Council.

Cr Maria Sampey has written to Greater Dandenong Council to stage an "independent" information session before submissions close.

She said the submission period was too short, given that residents will be distracted by Christmas and the holiday period.

In a recent motion, she successfully called for a hold on the council's approval until the EPA assessment - as well as the council undertaking community consultation.

"I'm upset that no one (on the council) has done anything about the community consultation. If we get one organised for the end of school holidays on 30 January, then it will be too late."

Cr Matthew Kirwan said it was "really disappointing" that the EPA had instead promoted an information session staged by the proponent Great Southern Waste.

"The state government authority promoting the applicant's information session is a conflict of interest and inappropriate."

The plant's site is 160 metres from Dandenong Creek, and 600 metres east of the nearest residences as well as 1.5 kilometres from Somerfield housing estate.

It is also east of Mt Hira College (1.4 kilometres), Buddhist and Sikh temples (about 1.5 kilometres), and a Freemasons Victoria facility (1.9 kilometres).

According to the submission, the plant will use technology from Norwegian company Energos with a "proven ability to meet stringent European Union emissions standards.

It will pose a "negligible" risk to human health, Great Southern Waste claims.

The plant will create a net reduction of 142,000 tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalent emissions - or greenhouse gases, according to Great Southern Waste.

It is still estimated to emit 9500 tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalent from its filtered 55-metre smoke stack.

The plant is described by Great Southern Waste as using gasification at 850°C to incinerate 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial waste a year.

Director Bill Keating said it would be diverting household waste from landfill.

Half of the waste fuel is expected to be food scraps, Great Southern Waste stated.

The submission has a long list of excluded material such as prescribed industrial waste, asbestos, building materials, radioactive waste, chemical waste, medical waste, carcasses and residential 'hard waste'.

Mr Keating said there would be "considerable legwork" done to audit and screen incoming waste to ensure there were no contaminants.

"We don't want to process that stuff. Plus if we let it through, we just wouldn't be licensed."

The EPA and Great Southern Waste will co-host the drop-in information session on Wednesday 11 December.

It is from 6 to 8pm on 11 December 2019 at Quest Apartments, Dandenong.

# Waste fuels fears

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

A proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South has been met by an overwhelming public backlash from hundreds of residents over air quality and health concerns.

The Environment Protection Authority and the plant's proponent Great Southern Waste have agreed to hold off the plant's assessment - so to stage a public conference to respond to the "high community interest".

Residents - as close as 1.4 kilometres from the plant - have written letters and signed peti-

tions, decrying the 70 Ordish Road site's proximity to Dandenong Creek, schools, colleges, kindergartens, places of worship and homes.

A 280-signature petition's covering letter stated homes were already impacted by two waste-related facilities, an organics garden and a commercial and industrial waste facility.

"Local residents have already made numerous complaints and reports to local council and EPA regarding the weird smells around our area.

"This (waste-to-energy plant) will definitely make the situation worse."

A Keysborough South resident wrote that the proposal would "literally shatter mine and so many other families' dreams".

"How can our kids still go to the local parks where there is air pollution, weird smells?"

Another wrote: "I appreciate and encourage the new technology however the location must be reselected. It cannot be built so close to our homes!"

On 3 March, the EPA will hold a '20b' community conference to "better understand the views and concerns of the community and stakeholders".

Independently chaired, the meeting will discuss "possible resolutions" to public objections, the EPA stated.

The EPA has also sought extra technical details from the plant's proponent Great Southern Waste

The list of 28 items included details on air emissions, odours, accidental emissions, air monitoring and auditing of waste fed into the plant.

Great Southern Waste is required to respond by 2 March.

Continued page 3

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# Waste plant fuels community concerns

From page 1

The proposed gasification plant is estimated to process 100,000 tonnes a year of non-recyclable municipal solid waste, and commercial and industrial waste.

The plant will create a net reduction of 142,000 tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalent emissions - or greenhouse gases, according to Great Southern Waste.

The plant would supply about 7.9 Megawatts of electricity to the grid - enough to power 7000 homes. About 1.4 Megawatts will be generated to power the facility.

Half of the waste fuel is expected to be organics and food scraps, Great Southern Waste stated.

The submission has a long list of excluded material such as prescribed industrial waste, asbestos, building materials, radioactive waste, chemical waste, medical waste, carcasses and residential 'hard waste'.

Great Southern Waste Technologies director Bill Keating said, contrary to objections, there would be little pollution from the plant.

He has described it as "world's best prac-

tice" and "comfortably compliant" with European Union standards, which are adopted in Victoria.

Mr Keating acknowledged Keysborough residents' concerns about health impacts, which he hoped to address during the conference.

He noted that no objections had been lodged by neighbouring businesses, Greater Dandenong Council or 'green' groups.

According to GSWT's modelling, even at maximum expected emission levels, there would be "negligible" human health impact and no pollution guideline breaches, Mr Keating said.

"It tells us that we can operate there and operate well within the levels of adverse human impact."

Homes as close as 1.4 kilometres from the plant would receive "very little impact at all".

They were outside the buffer area for the site's industrial-2 zone, one of the few areas of greater Melbourne where the plant could be built, Mr Keating said.

"In Europe, some of these facilities are 250-

300 metres from homes, schools and council buildings.

"After 25 years of operating, you can't find long-term detriment to any people living near these facilities.

"That gives us confidence in what we're doing."

In November, Greater Dandenong councillors rescinded its permit approval for building works.

The council had planned to wait for the EPA's verdict before reconsidering the proposal. However due to the delay extending beyond the statutory time-frame, GWST has appealed to VCAT to decide the matter.

Cr Maria Sampey, who led the rescission, said councillors were being ignored by the proponents.

"I want to have the full results (from the EPA) before I make a decision."

The community conference is at City of Greater Dandenong Civic Centre, 225 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong on 3 March, 6pm-9pm.

To register attendance, go to <https://engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals/GSWT>

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# Waste incinerator on hold but proponent still committed

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

The proponent of a waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South remains "fully committed" after Greater Dandenong Council put its approval on hold.

The council rescinded its permit approval for the Great Southern Waste Technologies proposal at 70 Ordish Road at a meeting on 11 November.

Two weeks earlier, the council had been deadlocked at 5-5 on the permit approval. It was passed on the casting vote of then-mayor Youhorn Chea.

However, with newly-elected councillor Peter Brown's support, the rescission motion was passed unopposed.

Cr Maria Sampey, the rescission mover, said the aim was for the council to hold-off until Environment Protection Authority Victoria



Maria Sampey at the site of the proposed waste-to-energy plant. 200000  
Picture: GARY SISSONS

assessed the plan.

It would also allow time for consultation with residents and nearby businesses.

"We're dealing with a major application - a waste-to-energy facility where about 100,000 tonnes of waste will be incinerated per year so we really need to get proper feedback ... for

councilors to make a decision."

In support, Cr Matthew Kirwan later said the motion wasn't an attempt to refuse the application.

He noted the facility was "not far" from residents in Dandenong South and Keysborough.

"For us to be asked to approve a planning application for it, without knowing the atmospheric emissions and any other environmental impacts or the ongoing site management procedures is neither reasonable nor responsible."

"As I said at the last meeting there is no rush.

"This application comes before the multi-council Expression of Interest procurement process, for which the economic viability of this facility relies, has even started."

Great Southern Waste Technologies director Bill Keating said the company was still con-

sidering what the council's decision meant for the project.

"Great Southern nonetheless remains fully committed to the project.

"This project is world's best practice and environmentally advanced waste treatment that will deliver improved outcomes for Dandenong and the wider Melbourne community."

The plant would be expected to incinerate 100,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste a year. About 3 per cent of ash byproduct is expected to be emitted from its 55-metre smoke stack.

It would generate 9.3 Megawatt hours of electricity, enough to power the plant (1.4 MWh) as well as about 7000 homes, according to Great Southern.

The project is currently being assessed by the EPA.

The EPA did not comment before deadline.

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JOURNAL



## Environment Protection Act 1970 Works Approval Application

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria has received the following application to issue a works approval or licence which permits work to be undertaken which will result in a discharge of waste to the environment or an increase or alteration in an existing discharge.

Great Southern Waste Technologies Pty Ltd has applied **1003592 X**

for a works approval for a waste to energy facility at the premises of 70 Ordish Road, Dandenong South VIC 3175. The facility will utilise gasification technology and process approximately 100,000 T/year of municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial waste. The development will supply approximately 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Please visit the Engage Victoria webpage for updates on the application including details of an upcoming information session hosted by the company:  
<https://engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals>

A copy or a summary of this application, accompanying plans, specifications and other information can be downloaded from [www.engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/epa-works-approvals). Interested persons may, within 21 days of the date of advertisement, comment in writing on the application and may request in writing to be notified if the works approval/licence is issued. All comments must be made by email to [works.approvals@epa.vic.gov.au](mailto:works.approvals@epa.vic.gov.au) or by mail to EPA Victoria GPO Box 4395 Melbourne Victoria 3001 Please note

that any comments received will usually be made publicly available. Further details please contact 1300 372 842.

# Waste-to-energy proponent argues case for emissions

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Emissions from a proposed waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South will be "comfortably" compliant with European Union standards, says its proponent.

Bill Keating, director of Great Southern Waste Technologies, says the proposed first such plant in the state at 70 Ordish Road would utilise technology used in Europe for the past 20 years.

He didn't have air-quality figures on hand, but said such plants had an "excellent track record" in meeting EU air emissions standards.

"The emissions profile should be very similar to Norway, which shows it functions well in this jurisdiction.

"We would expect we wouldn't exceed our (licensed) limits in any circumstance."

The plant would annually incinerate 100,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste other-

About 80 per cent would come from residential 'red' bins and 20 per cent from commercial and industrial sources, such as kitchens.

It would put a dent in the 2.5 million tonnes of Greater Melbourne waste dumped in landfill each year, Mr Keating said.

It also represents a 100,000 tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions a year, he says.

"Ideally, we're trying to provide alternatives from landfill. Landfill has had its day.

"Let's find something a step higher in the waste hierarchy, and a better way to deal with this waste."

Mr Keating welcomed mooted rises in landfill levies to encourage more investment in recycling.

"The waste industry needs more investment, better investment because there's not the recycling capacity we need."

It would generate 9.3 Megawatt hours of electricity, enough to power the plant (1.4

MWh) as well as about 7000 homes, Mr Keating said.

Ash by-product is collected by filters ahead of the 55-metre-tall smoke stack. About 3 per cent of it is expected to be emitted from the chimney, Mr Keating said.

About 20 per cent would be collected as 'bottom ash', which GSWT will seek to re-use as road material.

"These are things that don't combust, like minerals, quartz and sand.

"In some parts of Europe, they go to landfill. In other areas like the UK these bottom ashes are used for road base and cement additive.

"We don't expect it to be taken to prescribed landfill."

To go ahead, the project and its environmental impact has to be approved by state pollution watchdog Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

An 1000-page submission for the project,

including air-quality assessments, was submitted to the EPA in late October.

Mr Keating said the EPA was expected to publicly release the submission by mid November.

Greater Dandenong councillors are meanwhile set to vote a second time on a planning permit for the project on 11 November.

GSWT is also awaiting the opening of the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group's expression-of-interest process for an advanced waste processing tender.

The waste group's consortium of councils include Greater Dandenong.

"We haven't yet identified where the waste streams will come from," Mr Keating said.

All going well, Mr Keating hoped for EPA approval by the second quarter of 2020.

"It's still very early. If we were to have all our permits ready now, it will be another three years later to turn the key to start it up."

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