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Solvent plan a surprise

From page 1

"It's important to note that even though a grant has been awarded, this does not presume that a planning permit will be.

"When and if a planning permit application for this facility is submitted, council will undertake a very comprehensive assessment of it.

"Council will seek to engage with SV as soon as possible to get a more comprehensive understanding of their position."

The State Government's announcement follows significant community opposition to a waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South, which consumed much of 2020. Ultimately that facility, run by Great Southern Waste Technologies, was granted a works approval by the EPA however Greater Dandenong Council will appeal the decision in VCAT.

Remondis first applied for the grant for the solvent recycling facility in August 2020, with the plant scheduled to be operational from early 2024 if licencing and permits are received.

It would create 20 full time jobs across the planning, design and construction phase and longer-term employment.

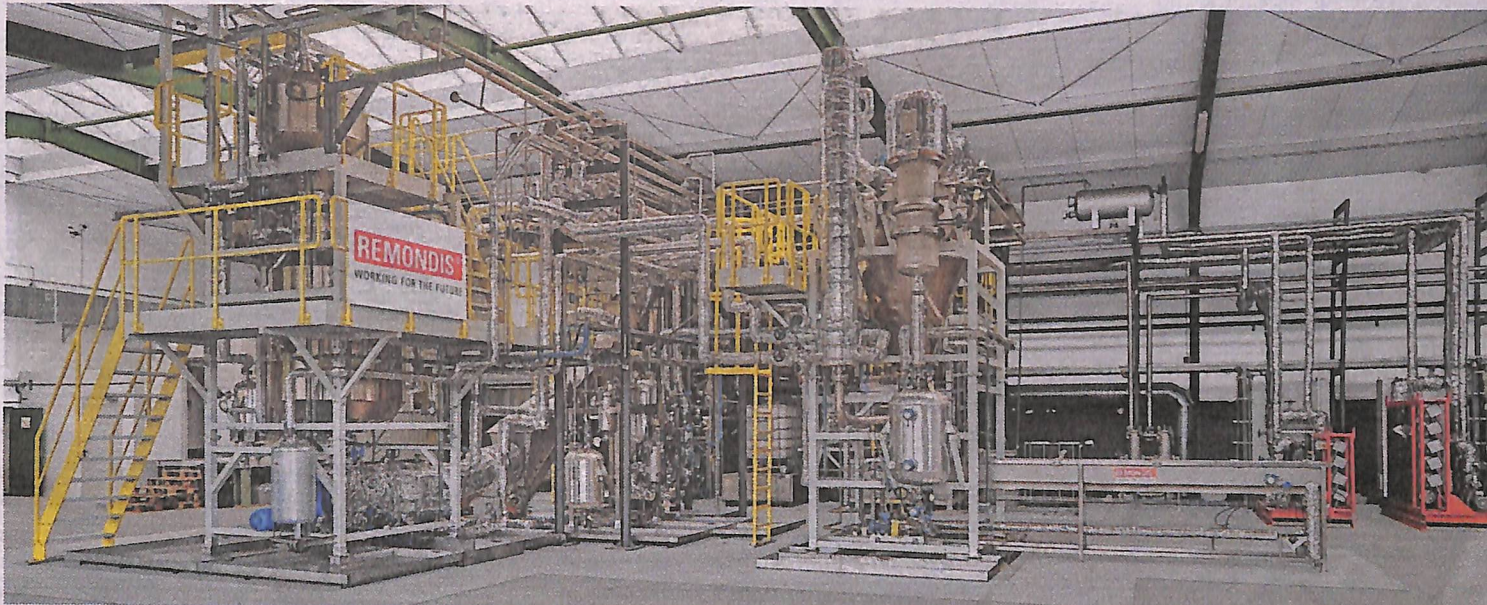
A spokesperson for Remondis said the company would engage in community consultation once reaching the planning application phase, expected to be in around mid-2023.

"We will welcome all aspects of the facility being open to scrutiny," the spokesperson said.

"Given that we are a world leader in operating such facilities around the world, and the enormous environmental and economic benefits this facility would bring to Victoria, we look forward to making our case."

The spokesperson added that the "facility would be safe", using leading-edge technology.

In fact, the spokesperson said, the recycled solvents would benefit the environment by "reducing reliance on virgin materials being



A concept image of the solvent recycling plant

Picture: SUPPLIED

used in solvent manufacture" and avoiding illegal dumping of solvent sludge, as well as a reduction in solvent waste being sent to landfill.

The recycled products would also benefit the economy by providing cheaper solvents for businesses to purchase.

Bangholme resident Alan Hood, who has long followed environmental issues within the City of Greater Dandenong, holds grave concerns for the plant, should it go ahead.

While he said he is "sympathetic" with the need to "get rid of the massive tonnage" of solvent waste, he doesn't believe it should be done within Dandenong.

"It's quite immoral to say the solution to these matters - fire outbreaks, and massive dumps in the northern and western parts of the city - should be solved by carting all that

material to Dandenong and building a plant there," he told the Journal.

"It's also immoral to build these plants in urban areas. We have areas in Victoria that are virtually absent of human habitation. We have areas where the prevailing wind blows offshore, where we can blow this out to sea and it doesn't harm anyone - so that's what they should do."

Mr Hood is worried that the process of converting the waste could release particulates and dioxins that are harmful to human health.

A fire at the plant could also carry dangerous fumes across residential areas, he added.

"The government has betrayed the people of Dandenong," he said.

"The council should definitely refuse the permit."

A State Government spokesperson said the funding was conditional on Remondis meeting all planning and EPA approvals through the normal process, and continuing to meet all required regulations.

"This funding was allocated based on a competitive process and assessed on its merits by an Interdepartmental Panel. This included a detailed assessment of environmental safeguards and strict conditions at the Remondis site," the government spokesperson said.

The State Government can withhold payment or terminate funding if Remondis does not meet the conditions outlined in the funding agreement.

An estimated 15,000-29,000 tonnes liquid waste containing recyclable solvent need to be managed in Victoria each year.