

Haste on waste

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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.