

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.

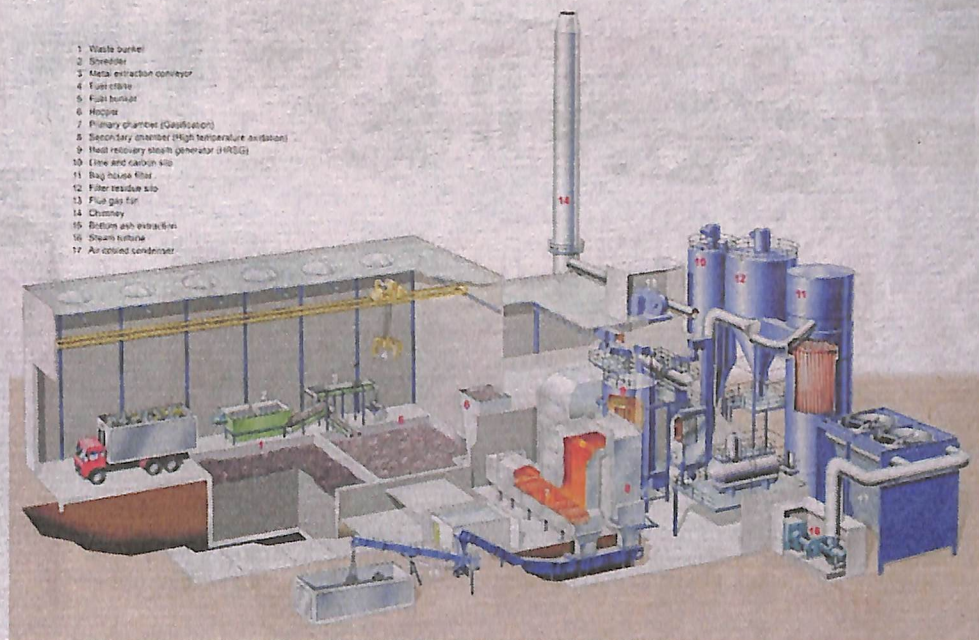
"With every little bit of emissions, you're really contributing to the problem.

"It's 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 CO2e emissions - about 9300 tonnes more than "an equivalent amount of average electricity produced in the National Electricity Market".