

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.

'No plan' to move zone

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Mayor Jim Memeti's call to move away Greater Dandenong's 'offensive' industry zone is not supported by the council or State Government.

After the EPA approved a waste-to-energy plant in the industry 2-zone, Cr Memeti said the location was too close to homes and schools in Dandenong South and Keysborough.

Residents, the South East Environment Group and Mr Hira College are some of the vocal opponents to the project at 70 Ordish Road.

Greater Dandenong city planning, design and amenity director Jody Bosman said: "There is currently no consideration being given to any changes to the Industrial 2 zone."

A Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning spokesperson said the project was within a State Significant Industrial Precinct.

"There are no plans to change the industrial

zoning in Dandenong South."

In its submission to the EPA in April, the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG) noted need for "extensive buffer zones" from the plant's location in the Ordish Road precinct waste and resource recovery hub.

"Ordish Road Hub is one of only three locations in Victoria zoned Industrial 2, a zone reserved for heavy and/or offensive industries requiring extensive buffer zones."

It stated the precinct's zoning made it a "suitable location for future waste and resource recovery activities".

The MWRRG - with the support of Greater Dandenong and 15 other councils - created a procurement focusing on long-term residual waste processing needs in Melbourne's South East and East.

The plant's proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies did not make the procurement short-list.