

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 “re-deem 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.