

Waste fight off

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong Council has withdrawn its legal fight against a controversial waste-to-energy plant in Dandenong South.

Despite its previously declared 'strong opposition', the council settled with the Environment Protection Authority and the plant's proponent Great Southern Waste Technologies ahead of an appeal hearing at VCAT on 1 February.

The plant is expected to burn 100,000 tonnes a year of municipal household solid waste, commercial and industrial waste to produce 7.9 MW of electricity to the grid.

Councillors endorsed the council's withdrawal in a recent closed briefing from council officers.

They were advised the council was unlikely to win its appeal against the EPA's works approval for the project, and faced a potential legal bill of up to \$700,000 including GSWT's costs.

"After extensive work by Council's environmental experts and lawyers and following a conclave which was held between both parties' expert consultants and EPA officers, it was established that the proposal meets the required relevant EPA legislation," city planning director Jody Bosman said.

"Additional conditions requested by council's lawyers are being added to the EPA Works Approval and have been agreed to in principle by the EPA.

"The settlement ends the prospects of Council incurring substantial costs in proceeding to a VCAT hearing and any claims in the absence of such settlement.

"VCAT have now confirmed the settlement in its Orders issued yesterday."

The project is sited at 80 Ordish Road in

Dandenong's industrial two zone - the home to the most offensive industries.

However it has drawn ire from residential estates and several schools within five kilometres away.

A "very disappointed" councillor Jim Memeti said residents in Dandenong South and Keysborough South were "sick and tired" of living near "hazardous industries".

"How many more of these hazardous waste facilities will be built? After this waste to energy facility, what's next?

"That's why the state government need to rezone (the area) as quickly as possible."

In 2020, Cr Memeti successfully moved for the council to campaign for the removal of the industrial two zone.

The council is arguing to cease future hazardous industries in the zone but allow existing heavy industry to continue.

Great Southern Waste Technologies director Bill Keating welcomed the "positive outcome" after an "expensive" legal battle.

"The council had their experts have a look at it.

"It was a case that they were then happy to withdraw from this."

In the out-of-court settlement, the council bore some of GSWT's legal costs.

GSWT also agreed to a further "minor" condition as part of the EPA works approval for the plant, Mr Keating said.

He said construction was at least 12 months away until the plant's detailed design was finalised.

A viable, ongoing supply of waste also needed to be secured prior to works, Mr Keating said.

Continued page 3