

Body count stacks up

By Casey Neill

A Dandenong funeral home got the green light to triple the number of bodies it stores.

Greater Dandenong Councillor Tim Dark was the only one to speak in opposition to the application for 2A Carmen Street at the Monday 28 May council meeting.

The decision amends an existing permit issued in 2013 to "use of the land for the temporary storage of deceased persons".

It will allow Templeton Family Funerals to store 12 deceased persons, up from four, and to increase its maximum storage time from 24 hours to five days.

The funeral home can also amend its existing plans to include a new lounge/arrangement room and mortuary/embalming room.

Cr Dark said his opposition was "because of the area in which the application is positioned".

He said it was directly across the road from residential properties and the intended use was "well and truly too much" for the area.

"I think this is in the wrong location," he said.

The council received two objections to the application, relating to a significant increase of stored bodies; traffic and congestion; waste vehicle noise; and a decrease in property value.

The officers' report said the key issue in addressing the application was the appropriateness of allowing the embalming of bodies, the increase in the total number of stored deceased and the time allowed in which the deceased must be transferred offsite.

It said officers considered the proposed amendments reasonable, "in that the additional use for the preparation of bodies would not result in any adverse amenity impacts to the site or surrounding land, and is not a significant departure from the intent of the original permit granted".

"In addition, the increase in capacity and holding time is considered reasonable, as all necessary preparation works and storage would be undertaken internally to the building, thus not visible to the street," the report said.

"The applicant has indicated that the amendments would not result in a change of staff numbers or hours of operation, and as such, there would be no change in the current car parking considerations.

"The existing building has roller shutter access to ensure loading and unloading be undertaken internally, so as to not impact the amenity of the surrounding area."

Cr Matthew Kirwan said the site was "very near" to Princes Highway in light industrial and commercial precinct.

"The reserve nearby creates a lot more traffic than this small business will," he said.

"I don't believe it will have an overly adverse impact at all."

On 14 May, councillors approved a permit for the Taha Humanity Association of Victoria to use its 9-11 Patrona Street site for embalming.

They agreed on a three-metre high fence to shield truck drivers at the neighbouring business from viewing dead bodies.