

Air pollution Inquiry

Mr Phillip Edwards

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Chairperson and members this submission deals specifically with the issue of Lead Pollution in the Latrobe Valley in particular the whipping up of Anti EPA sentiment in particular by the notorious Latrobe City Council announced by media release..

Elements in Latrobe City are smarting after the state minister for Planning Mr Wynne called in a permit for a Used Lead Acid Battery (ULAB) in an existing heavy industrial estate at Hazelwood North.

The anti development faction in the council mustered the numbers to refuse the permit and two later lost their seats at the council Election.

In the lead up to the refusal of the permit the council engaged an environmental consultant to review the issue of the works approval by the EPA and this consultant made a positive report to the council to issue the permit as did the professional town planning staff of the city.

The applicant filed an appeal to VCAT and the same forces who passed up the chance to appeal against the EPA approval and relied on the council flouting it's planning powers, now see VCAT as their light on the hill when in reality the Minister saved the council from a licking at VCAT.

It is hard against this background to understand the media release by the city that the community has a "lack of confidence" in the EPA.

The objectors recently distributed, by their numbers, eight thousand (8000) flyers to the homes of the residents of Latrobe City advertising a rally and got an attendance, by their reports, of one hundred and fifty (150) persons from a city population of seventy three thousand (73,000) people, ie .208 percent.

I note from social media traffic that ALiVE Gippsland who ran the rally seem to have a plan to circumvent the closing date for submissions to your committee and the words below come from their facebook page where they intend to introduce new matters after the closing date.

This is an affront to process and transparency.

Maggie Meadow

Admin

+1

Emma Biernacki

submissions for the inquiry need to be in by the 23rd April (Friday). However we hope to continue to collect questionnaires from the community until June. This way we can present them to the Inquiry when called up to present evidence. Quotes are being pulled from questionnaires (with respect to privacy) for ALiVe's submission- but any received after the 23rd will still be presented

I was a submitter to the EPA in favour of the works approval and noted the period for public submissions was extended from the statutory period of twenty one (21) days and finally ended up at about fifty six (56) days after a lobbying effort by the local objectors group.

During this extra time the objectors contacted two interstate competitors Enirgi from Wagga Wagga and Supercharge Batteries who are domiciled in the Philippines.

The submission on behalf of Enirgy by their consultant with a national footprint stated there were no town planning issues.

Speakers notes used by the two councillors at the infamous council meeting in particular the current mayor Councillor Gibson and the mover of the motion to refuse Councillor O'Callaghan were derived from if not

prepared by the interstate competitors consultants.

The interstate competitors have a virtual monopoly on battery recycling in Australia
Councillor O'Callaghan had posted on her Facebook page (where she advises the views thereon are her own) material disparaging the project long before the application was made to Council in a clear demonstration of apprehended bias.

Any criticism of the EPA should be that they gave too much leeway to the objectors and delayed their decision disadvantaging the company rather than any nonsense about the EPA's science.

- There has been an exhaustive amount of work put into the EPA process, with 5 totally independent reports written by experts in their fields, including:

- A Fellow of the Australasian College of Toxicology & Risk Assessment, the highest professional grade in this field, Dr Jackie Wright

- One of the most experienced engineers at EPA, supported by subject matter experts, Wendy Tao

- A world-renowned expert in the secondary lead industry, Mark Stevenson

- A nationally-recognised expert in hazardous waste and chemicals, Geoff Latimer (Proponent's advocate.)

- Lastly, Council engaged its own environmental consultant to review all of this, leading their planning department to recommend that Council grant the planning permit.

- They all reach the same end point. The impacts of lead emissions on air quality from this plant, and subsequent impacts on people, livestock or any other environmental component will be zero.

We can add the Gippsland Sustainability Group (The Greens) who submitted in favour.

In October 2019, I attended a public meeting at Hazelwood North after I received a misleading pamphlet delivered to my home.

The thrust of the flyer was that the World Health Organisation has not mandated a safe level of exposure to lead and that lead builds up in the body and is not expelled therefore the only safe level is zero.

This mantra has underpinned the campaign against the scientific work by the EPA assessors and is basically a slogan. Note "Unleaded" petrol has five milligrams of lead per litre, is it unsafe to use?

A dishonest campaign against the proposal resulted in signs on the highways against a smelter and images and articles in the media about the Port Pirie smelter in SA, a very large, dangerous and outdated smelter that has been used in a fear campaign here.

The opponents have not said one word against the Latrobe Magnesium Smelter Pilot plant, next to the battery recycler approved by council and the EPA, with lead emissions inevitable.

The Latrobe Magnesium Group (LMG) smelter (that I own shares in) will use Fly Ash from from power station ash dumps.

Power station fly ash contains heavy metals including Lead, Mercury and Cadmium and yet Latrobe City without advertising (they were not required to) in the knowledge of the sensitivity of the local residents to lead pollution sneaked the permit through without an EPA approval in place unlike the ULAB plant where they required an EPA approval first.

Assuming the LMG pilot smelter receives ash containing heavy metals, we know the plant will produce two products, one Magnesium, and solid waste which is cement powder for concrete. The issue is where does the lead and other heavy metals go and the obvious answer is out the chimney stack. The only issue is the amounts.

I first learned of the LMG town planning permit from the company announcement to the ASX.

My email to the city for a copy of the permit and the Air Emissions report required for an application in the industrial 2 Zone has never been answered. However, I did find out that the report contains no mention of heavy metal air pollution, meaning Latrobe City either received a dodgy air emissions report or more likely they do accept there is a safe level of lead pollution and do not reveal this to the public.

The committee may wish to clarify this with the city council.

This issue of the LMG pilot plant lead emissions is not simply past history because if the pilot plant proves successful then LMG have plans to build a full scale production plant producing forty eight thousand (48,000) tonnes per annum of magnesium next to the pilot plant.

This will require environmental and town planning approval so the stage is set for the residents of Hazelwood North who placed their confidence in Latrobe City to have another environmental issue in their

backyard. This time they will be up against 54 employees in the pilot plant, local suppliers and a cohort of local shareholders with no connotations of Chinese involvement.

Every coal fired power station in the Latrobe Valley (and around the world) has many millions of tonnes of fly ash in its ash dumps. There is a potential for licensing the technology by LMG so there could be a magnesium smelter near every power station only limited by the market.

The situation raises questions about whether Latrobe City should have planning powers for large projects over a certain threshold say thirty million (\$30,000,000) dollars.

Currently lead pollution in the Latrobe Valley is on a downward trajectory as industries producing lead close down.

Prior to the closure of Hazelwood Power the total lead pollution was about five hundred and fifty (550) kilos of lead pollution per annum. Taking out Hazelwood at 200kgs per year, Morwell Power station at about seventeen (17) kilos as well as the Carter Holt Harvey timber Mill at 6.3 kilos represents a clear trend downward but with a large loss of employment.

Yallourn W Power Station slated for closure will take out another one hundred and forty (140) kilos of lead pollution again with a loss of jobs.

The Carter Holt Harvey sawmill at Hazelwood North is the closest industrial plant to the Hazelwood North school that is the focus of attention by anti lead groups with their Zero lead mantra. The mill is currently in mothballs after it closed with a loss of 160 jobs due to the pine plantations being burnt. Timber mills are not normally associated with lead pollution but the National Pollution Inventory shows in its last years of operation the kilns were producing 6.3 kilos of lead pollution up wind from the school with no reports of lead related illnesses over many decades.

Politicians who beat the anti lead drum and yet claim to be pro timber industry would have to choose between timber jobs and pandering to zero lead groups in the unlikely event the mill was slated to start up again. They may wish to purchase a copy of the Kama Sutra.

The same politicians who might also claim to be pro farmer might have to re consider supporting Latrobe city Council's anti EPA, anti lead crusade.

The Australian fertiliser Industry have a publication called; Heavy Metals in Fertilisers and Agriculture. The link to the publication is;

<https://www.incitepivotfertilisers.com.au/~//media/Files/IPF/Documents/Agritopics/61%20Heavy%20Metals%20Ag>

This publication shows in a table on page seven (7) the potential amounts of lead and other heavy metals in fertilisers used by farmers.

The Hazelwood North School is surrounded by pasture subject to farmers spreading lead about.

Proposals being discussed by Latrobe City such as having a lead monitoring station on the school site are preposterous when a farmer spreading lead drives past.

Currently Latrobe City is mulling over a proposal to do lead monitoring in Latrobe City presumably by the same EPA they disparage. Would farmers appreciate having the single most important tool they have for pasture improvement demonised by grandstanding city councillors?

Recommendations.

1. That the committee find that there is no basis for Latrobe City Council's criticism of the EPA.
2. That the minister for planning institute an inquiry into Latrobe Council's exercise of its town planning responsibilities in a region needing replacement jobs as the coal power industry is in decline, with a focus on the conduct of the councillors determining the ULAB planning application as a case study.
3. That the minister for planning investigate restricting Latrobe City to projects below a set level of capital

expenditure say thirty million (30,000,000) dollars.

4. That Latrobe City be required to explain to this committee why the issue of lead pollution was not addressed in the LMG planning permit and why it was not advertised given the proximity to the school?

5. That the minister of Education review the viability of the Hazelwood North Primary School to operate in close proximity to the Hazelwood North Heavy Industry Park in the long term given the park has more potential for industries to set up there. That the investigation take into account issues of public safety on the school site being surrounded by large amounts of grass as climate change impacts on the frequency and ferocity of grass fires.

Yours Sincerely.

Phillip Edwards

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: [6082173913418-Kellie O Facebook Page.pdf](#)

Signature:

Phillip John Edwards