



Hon Albert Jacob MLA
Minister for Environment; Heritage

Your Ref: Petition No 58
Our Ref: 50-05862

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Simon

Dear ~~Mr O'Brien~~

Thank you for your letter dated 30 October 2014 requesting comment regarding Petition No. 58 – Waste to energy incinerator.

In 2011, the then Minister for Environment requested the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the Waste Authority to investigate the environmental and health performance of waste to energy technologies internationally. The purpose of this investigation was to assist Government in determining the merits and possible health and environmental implications of a waste to energy industry in WA.

As a result of the investigation, both the EPA and the Waste Authority are confident that, subject to conditions and matching suitable technologies to types of waste input and appropriate plant scale, waste to energy plants employing best practice can be operated with acceptable impacts to our community. A copy of the advice provided to the former Minister for Environment is attached (Attachment 1). The advice contains six key principles and 21 recommendations for the successful operation of waste to energy plants in Western Australia. These principles and recommendations directly relate to some of the issues raised in the submissions, including dioxins and furans.

As part of this investigation, the Authorities engaged WSP Environment and Energy Ltd to gather information from operating full-scale, commercial plants that process municipal solid waste (MSW) and from a variety of technology types. The three full technical reports are available on the EPA's website

(http://www.epa.wa.gov.au/Policies_guidelines/strategicadvice/Pages/default.aspx?cat=Strategic%20Advice&url=Policies_guidelines/strategicadvice) and may be of assistance as they address a number of the issues raised in the submissions.

A key point of the advice was that engagement with the community through the full planning, design, environmental approvals and commissioning process for waste to energy plants is essential to build community confidence and acceptability.

The EPA has had five waste to energy proposals referred to it in recent years. The EPA has assessed and recommended approval of three of these, with the remaining two still under assessment. Of the three recommended to me, I have approved two of these and the third is currently in the appeals process.

It should be noted that the five waste to energy proposals have all been subject to the Public Environmental Review level of assessment, which is the highest level. This requires a public consultation period, after which the proponent must respond to any issues raised in a Response to Submissions document, which is made publicly available at the time of the EPA's recommendation. This allows for any submitter to appeal the EPA's recommendation if they do not feel that their concerns have been adequately addressed.

Waste to energy is only one part of the planning for waste management in Western Australia. In March 2012, the then Minister for Environment, launched the Western Australian Waste Strategy: Creating the right environment. The Strategy outlines objectives and priorities to reduce waste to landfill and increase recycling, recognising waste to energy as a better management option than landfill.

A number of the specific issues raised in the petition relate to Kwinana WTE. Project Co Pty Ltd's Kwinana Waste to Energy Project. This proposal is still under assessment by the EPA and therefore it is inappropriate for me to comment on these issues at this time. However, further details on the scope of the assessment can be found on the EPA's website (<http://edit.epa.wa.gov.au/EPADocLib/KwinanaWTE-ESD030513.pdf>).

Should you require further information regarding air monitoring in the Kwinana region, the Department of Environment Regulation (DER) operates three air monitoring stations (South Lake, Wattleup and North Rockingham) in and around the Environmental Protection (Kwinana) (Atmospheric Wastes) Policy 1999 area, with the Kwinana Industries Council also maintaining a further three sites. The DER has previously reported on emissions in this area in a report titled Background Air Quality Monitoring in Kwinana 2005-10, which is available at www.der.wa.gov.au.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Albert Jacob MLA
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT; HERITAGE

Att.

26 NOV 2014