

**West's Road RDF & Waste Management
Community Reference Group
AOC
Special Meeting
5.00 to 7.15pm, 17 March 2016
Conference Rooms C & D
Notes**

Present:

Jacqui Scott - Community representative
Karen Hucker – community representative
Harry Van Moorst – WREC representative
Julian Menegazzo – adjoining landowner representative
Peter Haddow – Community representative (for first half hour)
Kimi Pellosis – Community representative
John Faranda – Werribee South Ratepayers Association representative
Michelle Lee – Planner, Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG)
Cr Peter Maynard – Councillor, City of Wyndham
Cr Bob Fairclough – Councillor, City of Wyndham
David Suder – Director Infrastructure, City of Wyndham
Simon Clay – Manager Refuse Disposal Facility
Bruce Turner – Independent Chair

Apologies:

Lindsay Swinden – Community representative

The meeting commenced at 5:00 pm. No conflicts of interest were declared

1. Welcome and Introductions

Bruce welcomed everyone and outlined the purpose of this Special Meeting of the CRG. He said it had been convened to discuss in further detail the Works Approval application that had been flagged at the CRG's previous meeting on 10 February, as an input to Council's formal consideration of the matter on 29 March.

There was discussion of whether any of the information to be provided was to be kept in confidence by members. It was agreed that officers would identify specific information that should be kept in confidence if and when it was discussed. In the event, given the information provided was already in the public domain or would be shortly as part of papers for the next Council meeting, no confidential matters were identified during this meeting.

2. Notes and actions from the previous meeting

Since this was a meeting outside of the usual cycle of CRG meetings, there was no review of the draft notes from the previous 'normal' meeting. Simon indicated that the draft notes would be circulated in the next two business days for confirmation at the next meeting on 13 April.

3. RDF Strategic Plan

As the context for discussion of the proposed Works Approval application, Simon presented an outline of a 2020-40 Strategic Plan and Vision for the RDF that had been prepared by officers for Council's review and endorsement at its forthcoming March Council meeting. A copy of this presentation is provided to CRG members in a pdf document separate to these notes.

The Vision statement was as follows:

The RDF will become the centre of a precinct focussed on resource recovery, with residual waste to landfill. Complementary businesses are co-located and the area is a centre for economic growth and green jobs. The centre plays a key role in environmental education and is acknowledged by the community.

There was general support for this Vision. David pointed out that Council could simply focus on the future of its landfill business but, through this statement and the Strategic Plan, would be emphasising the importance of resource recovery and that the precinct could become a hub for complementary activities. It was noted that this aligned with what the State Government has been envisioning for the future of waste in Victoria and metro Melbourne for some time.

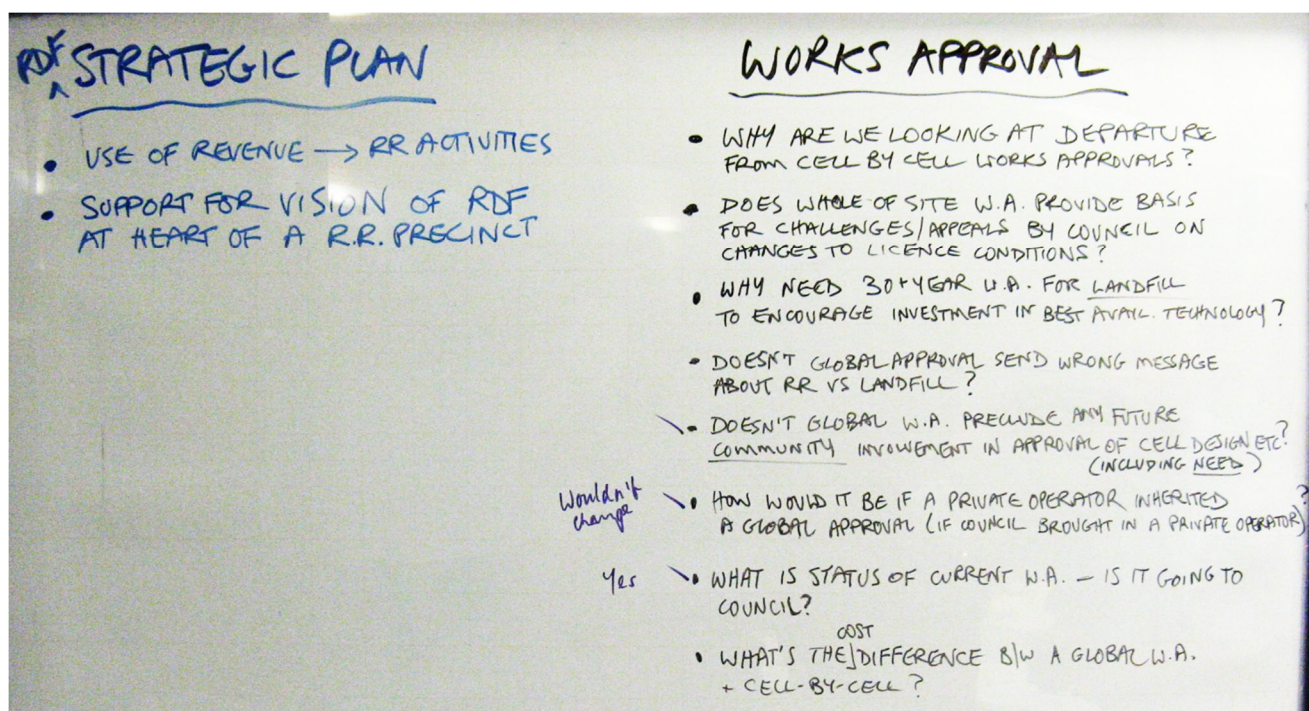
The term “residual waste” was discussed and clarified – it means the waste remaining after all means of economically viable recovery have been applied (including recovery of thermal energy). Ideally this will be the only type of waste going to landfill in the future.

4. Proposed works approval

Simon and David explained that, despite the fact that there is planning approval in place for the whole site, officers feel a whole of site works approval is needed in order to provide security to support investment in resource recovery technologies and minimise the volume of waste going to landfill. Bob outlined some of the current challenges in relation to resource recovery and said we are in a time of transition towards maximising this recovery.

David said the whole of site works approval was proposed to form part of the RDF Strategic Plan to be considered for endorsement by Council.

CRG members were invited to identify the questions and concerns this proposal raised for them and these were documented on a whiteboard:



The works approval questions (roughly in the order discussed), with summarised answers were:

- *What is the status of the current works approval – is it going to Council?*

A whole of site works approval is proposed by officers and will be going to Council for consideration as part of the RDF Strategic Plan.

- *Does a whole of site works approval provide (the) basis for challenges/ appeals by Council on changes to licence conditions?*

Simon had previously circulated by email to the CRG information on EPA's requirements in addition to a works approval, whereby the design for each new cell has to be prepared separately and approved by an independent auditor and EPA. This would reinforce design standards current at the time of the new cell design, rather than those prevailing when the original works approval was granted. (hardcopies of this advice were also handed out at this meeting)

- *How would it be if a private operator inherited a global approval (if Council brought in a private operator)?*

The same conditions would apply to the private operator since the works approval and subsequent cell by cell approvals apply to the site, not the operator.

- *Doesn't global works approval preclude any future community involvement in approval of cell design (including need for new cells)?*

It appears that the requirements for ongoing approvals for each cell (as circulated by Simon as referred to above) currently do not explicitly provide for community involvement once the works approval is determined. However, it was noted that the EPA licence for the RDF does reinforce the need for a CRG as a key mechanism for ongoing involvement of the community in matters relating to development and operation of the RDF (as per all licences for waste disposal facilities in Victoria).

- *Why are we looking at departure from cell by cell works approvals?*
- *Why (do you) need (a) 30+ year works approval for landfill to encourage investment in best available technology?*
- *Doesn't global approval send the wrong message about resource recovery vs landfill?*
- *What is the cost difference between a global works approval and cell by cell?*

David outlined the economic drivers around the RDF and resource recovery technologies. He said the systems required to reduce environmental impacts of waste processing produce a "drive for size" making hubs a preferred way of achieving economies of scale that encourage investment in alternatives to landfill. He said individual Councils do not produce enough waste to support, on their own, a facility big enough to result in a competitive gate fee.

David said that, at the moment, waste to energy (WTE) is too expensive compared to landfill. WTE technology is capital intensive and needs to be operated at design capacity to reduce costs.

In addition, approximately 25% of the waste that is processed through a WTE facility is destined for landfill. Therefore a WTE facility needs certainty on the management of this residual waste for around 25 years and the ideal situation would be co-location with a landfill to minimise those waste management costs. The same logic applies for other alternate waste technologies such as sorting and composting.

Cost savings on individual works approvals was not cited by Council as the main driver for a one-off global works approval, although it was also acknowledged that each application costs in the vicinity of \$200,000. As outlined above, significant cell by cell technical approvals would still be required which would have associated costs.

5. Conclusions

During further discussion of these questions by the CRG some key comments and additional questions were captured:

- Concern that community involvement would be downgraded if the RDF were to be privately operated (although also noted that a CRG would still be required whoever the operator is)
- Since waste is transported across the metro area now, is co-location of WTE and landfill really a significant factor in the viability of WTE?
- Wouldn't a works approval for around 5 years be sufficient to provide security to encourage investment?
- Global/ longer term approval seems OK if it makes it possible to realise the Vision for the RDF precinct more quickly; but make sure the language in any public documents is easily understandable for the layperson
- The distinction between what's a commercial decision to be made without community involvement and Council's responsibility to ratepayers is confusing (it was explained that the Strategic Plan is being put to Council for endorsement without a wider consultation process, but the works approval application would be subject to a public process overseen by EPA).

No consensus was sought at the end of the meeting. The one area on which a natural consensus emerged was on the long term Vision for the RDF and surrounding precinct. Apart from that, there were a range of views on what was an appropriate timeframe for the next works approval for cell design and construction to be sought by Council. It appeared all could see value in an approval that was for more than one cell, but there was no agreement on whether this might best be for 5 years, 25 years or longer.

6. Next steps

Council will be briefed on Monday 21 March with a draft agenda for the 29 March Council meeting. These notes will be provided to Councillors as part of the briefing.

The next CRG meeting is at 4 to 7 pm on Wednesday 13 April 2016.

The Meeting closed at 7:15 pm