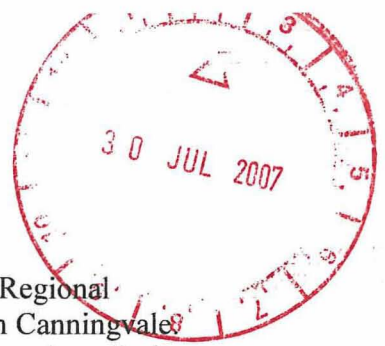


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I live with my family in Willetton, approximately 1.5 kilometers from the Regional Resource Recovery Centre (RRRC), which is situated in Bannister Road in Canningvale. Within the RRRC is a Waste Composting Facility (WCF) which is continuously polluting the atmosphere with a vile and foul odour. The W.C.F has been operating since 2002.

This atrocious odour varies but basically can be described as a very bad rubbish bin smell. This vile odour engulfs our neighbourhoods and parts of the suburbs of Willetton, Leeming, Bullcreek, and Canningvale and has been reported at Murdoch Hospital, and generally within a 5 kilometer radius of the plant.

The foul odour is produced 24 hours every day, and it depends on the prevailing conditions as to who the unlucky residents are who have to put up with it. Some days and nights it is trapped under the temperature inversion that occurs regularly on cold evenings and mornings in these areas. On these occasions everyone gets the stink, and it can hang around for days on end. Other times the smell travels on the wind, so someone is always affected.

This atmospheric pollution makes it impossible to enjoy not only our own properties, but also the local parks and walkways, the shopping facilities, sporting venues, alfresco dining, and normal social activities. It is also likely to affect property price values.

As a result of a public meeting held early in June (2006), some concerned and frustrated residents (including myself and my wife Bev) formed an action group to share information, ideas and strategies, and the work load associated with these activities, and those of distributing that information to the relevant authorities to try to rid our suburbs of the odour.

The Action Group (Canning Melville Community Odour Action Group – CMCOAG) has attended council meetings at the City of Canning, City of Melville, Southern Metropolitan Regional Council (SMRC), plus met with members of parliament – Tony McRae (Member for Riverton), Steve Thomas (Shadow Minister for the Environment), Tony Simpson (Member for Serpentine Jarrahdale), Simon O'Brien (Member for South Metropolitan), Trevor Sprigg (Member for Murdoch) and Paul Omodei (Opposition Leader)

We have written many detailed letters to Alan Carpenter (Premier), Jon Ford (Minister for Local Government), Jim McGinty (Minister for Health), various Ministers for the Environment, the Minister for Climate Change and only received one reply resulting in a meeting, with Malcolm Bradshaw, Director of Strategic Planning (Premiers Office).

Detailed letters of our concerns were sent to all Mayors and Councillors of the 7 Councils that form the Southern Metropolitan Regional Council, the local government authority that manages the RRRC.

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There are major concerns about the Waste Composting Facility with regards to the odour, the Health risks, the Environment, the way the SMRC is running the plant, and Local Government issues with regard to how the SMRC has influence over the finances of the 7 Councils.

The City of Canning Council appears to be a divided council, and some of the decision making and overturning of council voting by the Mayor and CEO is the subject of a complaint to the Local Government Authority.

During our investigations we have discovered or been informed:

- ⇒ Costs were cut to meet the original budget for construction
- ⇒ Savings were in the areas of Odour collection and Filtering
- ⇒ Environmental Waste Technologies (EWT) – build/operate/ commission contract could not meet the handover requirements and DEC commitments after 1 year, so negotiated its way out of the contract with SMRC. EWT were the licence holders for the Eweson Digesters system selected by the SMRC.
- ⇒ As part of the Separation, EWT withdrew all technical support originally offered for the life of the plant, claiming that the standards could not be met because of price driven changes to the original specifications.
- ⇒ Conditions specifically labeled as “Enforceable by Law” have seemingly been ignored by the various Environment Minister’s and the EPA.
- ⇒ Complaints have been made about the odour problems for 4 years.
- ⇒ The DEC will not prosecute SMRC after continual breaches of Section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act (1986)
- ⇒ The DEC keep issuing the SMRC with a licence to operate even though it is conditional upon compliance with Ministerial Conditions, and the DEC is aware it is in continuous substantial breach of these Conditions.
- ⇒ The major factor in controlling ODOUR in Waste Composting Facilities, (World Best Practice) is to enclose all areas where odour is produced, maintain those areas under NEGATIVE PRESSURE, and capture all odorous air and filter it before it is released into the atmosphere.
- ⇒ It would appear NEGATIVE PRESSURE (which prevents the odour escaping from the buildings) has never been achieved by the WCF, and therefore the plant has never complied with its Ministerial conditions, or licence conditions.
- ⇒ The SMRC has no ratepayers to answer to, in regards to the complaints by the community. The member councils have to deal with ratepayers themselves. This chiefly affects residents of City of Canning and City of Melville.
- ⇒ City of Canning Mayor Lekias is the Canning representative on the SMRC and he claims he cannot influence the SMRC with local issues because he is only 1 voice in voting power, against 6 other council representatives - thus the Canning rate payers have no voice of influence in the SMRC.

SMRC has control over 7 council’s finances under an Establishment Agreement where the SMRC can demand money for the RRRRC project and the Councils must pay up – even if a majority of the council votes NO!!

- ⇒ The Management of the WCF allowed the plant to run down to the point where the Bio Filters were not performing to even half their capacity to filter foul air. They have not been following maintenance procedures as set out in the Environmental Management Systems (EMS) which is an integral component and document forming part of the Licence Conditions and Agreement. The bio-filters still are not working, even after being completely rebuilt. This system of odour control is outdated, and the cause of many Composting Facilities being forced to close throughout the world.
- ⇒ SMRC CEO Stuart McAll claimed inexperience for the failure of the filters. This is unbelievable as the EMS was drafted with expert consultation.
- ⇒ The World Conference on Waste Management held in Perth between 19th and 22nd September 2006, had as its major sponsors the DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION, Western Australian Local Government Authority, and the Waste Management Authority. – NO WONDER we cannot get any co-operation.
- ⇒ The showpiece demonstration and tour venue, visited by the delegates from all over the world, was the RRRC's Waste Composting Facility at Canningvale.
- ⇒ To date, millions of taxpayer's money has been spent on the WCF and it is still not successful.

This issue started as an ODOUR problem, and whilst investigating that issue, we have uncovered a great deal more. There has to be questions asked why the Government Ministers allow the SMRC to keep breaking the law and get away with it.

A recent works programme to replace the ducting and air collection system, as suggested in The Odour Report, has been completed early this year at a cost of about \$2.4 million. This report was by The Odour Unit (TOU), a private company recommended by the DEC and Department of Health. If either DEC or DoH say anything about the odour, the SMRC say they were following the recommendations of the DEC or the DoH preferred specialists. Thus it is another's fault.

The then Minister for the Environment Mark McGowan was informed by the SMRC that once implemented these changes should minimize the problem of the odour, but if it did not SMRC Chairman Doug Thompson stated "*we will review the situation again*".

A spokesperson for The Odour Unit would not give any guarantee the problem would be fixed. The SMRC asked for and had to be given the money from the member councils by way of a guarantor agreement with the State Treasury Department.

We had a copy of the Tender Documents, are qualified to tender on the works, and have had a guided tour of the WCF with the then Superintendent of Works, Kevin Jones, who showed us the plant so that we could inspect and assess the scope of the tender works. These changes will help in the collection of foul air, simply because it will enable more of the foul air to be captured in the places it congregates (highest part of the roof space).

BUT the capacity of the fans will not ever be enough to create NEGATIVE PRESSURE, let alone maintain it when the roller doors are opened.

It would seem the prevailing breezes can suck the foul air from the building through the many openings and penetrations because without Negative Pressure there is not enough inwards sucking force to override the natural conditions.

The building appears to leak like a sieve, and the only way to prevent the hot odorous air from escaping is to maintain the NEGATIVE PRESSURE.

It is a licence condition, and a commitment to the Minister, enforceable by Law, that the building will be at all times maintained under NEGATIVE PRESSURE.

At present the Waste Composting Facility is still carrying out testing of its new air ducting systems, but 5 months of testing can only mean that they are aware that it is not going to work any better than the previous system. DEC claim they cannot shut them down, because they voluntarily closed just 3 days before DEC would have closed them, and until they are officially open for business, they can claim final tuning and balancing of the systems are resulting in odour escaping.

When we get a response from a Government Department, they do not answer our questions, but reply that \$2.4 million of works are underway to address the odour problems, so give it time. This seems to be a cop out, and an excuse used way too easily. We are told to direct our concerns and complaints to the SMRC. We all have been down that track to no avail. **WHY COMPLAIN TO THE RECURRING OFFENDER?**

The Health Department seem to be sitting on their hands as well. We have many emails of residents with health problems directly related to occurrences of odour emissions. We took air samples in canisters supplied by DEC in March 2007, and they still have not released the findings. **THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NEGLIGENT.**

We have the ability (but not the finances yet) to take our own samples, and have them delivered to an independent laboratory in the USA within 72 hours (the recommended maximum time lapse for correct sampling), and receive an analysis of over 60 chemicals, emailed back within 10 days, **GUARANTEED!!**

The SMRC recently paid for full colour full page adverts in all of the local papers, claiming there were no health risks, and that they had the all clear from the DoH, a claim the Health Department denies emphatically. The SMRC has a media organization on a \$5500 per month retainer, just to put out releases like this to counter anything we might have in the papers. **WE ARE ONLY EXPRESSING OUR CONCERNS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.** The SMRC seem to be Corporate BULLIES with an unlimited budget, of ratepayer's money.

People and animals do not get sick just from a smell!!

The Minister for Local Government doesn't even have the courtesy to respond to our concerns.

I wrote letters about how the City of Canning over turned decisions made by a majority of Councillors, with respect to advancing further funding to the SMRC. Apparently, even if a majority of our elected representatives vote against more money being given to the SMRC, unless certain conditions are met, the City of Canning, and all other participating Councils, have to give the SMRC whatever funding they request.

I also asked about a undeclared interest by one of the Canning Councilors, who is the author of a text book used by thousands of Secondary students, that discusses the merits of the SMRC. It would seem a pecuniary interest because the closure of the WCF would make his book inaccurate, resulting in its need for rewriting, and subsequent replacement. This book is compulsory text, and sells for around \$80 per copy. This Councillor is still voting on SMRC issues. **My letter was sent in August 2006.** We have followed up with various enquires as to the outcome but have not received replies.

I also queried the Meeting procedures by the SMRC. They have not at times followed the guidelines for advertising meetings, changing dates without notice, and not making copies of the agenda available to the public. Now we have to pay for the agendas. Town of East Fremantle imposed a condition on funding for the SMRC (before they found that they didn't have that right) that they required an independent review of the SMRC with regard to operational and financial procedures. The successful *independent* consultants were a company called Quadro, but when a search of the directors is done, the main players are former directors of EWT, the company that built the Waste Composting Facility. They were invited to tender by CEO Stuart McAll.

Now to the Minister for Climate Change.

There are serious questions in the claims of greenhouse gas reductions, the amount of landfill being saved, the amounts of carbon dioxide being reduced because of the WCF. These figures change by the day, depending if the SMRC are trying to impress the general public, or to reassure us all that the WCF is a valuable contributor to saving the planet. I asked the Minister for an explanation, but his department is probably waiting for a letter of clarification from the SMRC. There are questions about Carbon Credit Trading, because if the Carbon Credits are gained because of false information, selling them would not be legal.

I have many more serious issues to raise, but have not had a forum in which to give them a hearing. An inquiry would give me, and others a chance to get answers, and to also resolve the problem of having a major polluter in our neighbourhood, **a neighbourhood where we were living before this problem industry was located here.**

THE WCF SHOULD BE RELOCATED. It should never have been allowed to be located in a residential area. The WCF has been a disaster of costly proportions both in value and health of human lives, and taxpayer's money.

Rod Olsen



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