



Stinky compost plant closed

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SOUTHERN Metropolitan Regional Council (SMRC) has caved in to public pressure and temporarily closed its \$60 million suburban composting plant.

The facility is responsible for causing a rotten stench which residents in Leeming and Willetton say is making their lives a misery.

SMRC management was on notice to fix the problem by the end of the month or face being closed a second time.

The Department of Environment and Conservation in December closed the plant until it was satisfied the odour problem was solved.

It reopen in January but residents say the smell has returned and it is as bad as ever.

The plant, which process rubbish from seven southern metropolitan councils, was championed as a green alternative to landfill dumping and the future of rubbish disposal for Perth.

SMRC chairman Doug Thompson today announced the SMRC had decided to close the plant until a \$2.4 million upgrade to tackle the odour problem was completed.

"We have made this decision in the interests of the community and we are determined to ensure that residents are not subject to the release of any odours from the facility," he said.

After receiving dozens of complaints and carrying out daily inspections, the department has told the SMRC to fix the problem by the end of the month or risk being shut down a second time.

Residents who live close to the plant say it should never have been built near homes and must be closed permanently or relocated.

They liken the smell to the stench of a rancid rubbish bin.

Riverton MP and former Environment Minister Tony McRae yesterday supported residents demands for the plant to close permanently.

He said the SMRC, had failed miserably to comply with basic operating conditions and residents should not have to put up with the putrid odour any longer.

"This plant is impacting on the lives of hundreds, possibly thousands of people, through its stinking emissions," he said.

"The SMRC was closed last year because they weren't complying with their operating conditions

and they were allowed to re-open to prove they had fixed their operations.

"It's clear the SMRC has failed.

"Having a world class recycling centre is what we all want.

"What we don't need is a second rate, unsustainable and poorly managed stink house."

SMRC management has previously denied the plant was source of the smell, even after a comprehensive independent study pinpointed it as the culprit.

The seven councils which make up the SMRC have committed millions of dollars toward the plant, which takes rubbish from 350,000 south-of-the-river residents and turns the organic waste into compost.

Northern suburbs councils are considering building a similar plant.

But critics of the facility, which include a former engineer who was responsible for keeping it running and the WA Conservation Council, suspect the environmental benefits are being exaggerated while its problems are overlooked.

A similar plant in the US which the Canning Vale facility was modelled was closed due massive cost blow outs.

At least one SMRC member council, the City of Canning, is looking at other waste disposal options as fears mount that ratepayers have been committed to spending millions of dollars over 20 years on a white elephant.

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