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Waste facility put on notice

16/Dec/2008

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THE operators of the Canning Vale waste composting facility have been issued with a Department of Environment and Conservation environmental protection notice ordering them to improve the facility's odour abatement response or risk closure.

The Southern Metropolitan Regional Council was given an ultimatum last month to stop the odour impact on residents or shut down after a DEC investigation.

As part of its response, the SMRC proposed further testing to identify if an odour existed, despite the DEC confirming it.

But DEC deputy director general Robert Atkins last week described the suggestion for the SMRC's own investigation into the cause of the odour as "inadequate" and said the council's response needed considerable improvement.

"Specifically, among other requirements, the plan needs to include an independent engineering review, a process and systems audit and an independent management review of areas that may impact on odour emissions and controls," he said.

"While DEC acknowledges the work undertaken in preparing the draft odour abatement plan, it is inadequate in its current form."

He said the environmental protection notice served on the SMRC included a list of amendments required and a time frame for implementation.

A failure to comply could force the centre to close until the criteria are met.

Southern Metropolitan Regional Council chairman Doug Thompson said the SMRC remained committed to working with the DEC to address odour issues, but reaffirmed his position that the basis for the DEC's concerns was flawed.

He said he had serious concerns about the quality of the DEC report and would refer the matter to the SMRC's lawyers.

He has previously claimed the DEC used flawed evidence to mount its case, which included not testing on-site, inconclusive chemical sampling, a lack of scientific peer review and a failure to investigate any other sources of odour in the Canning Vale industrial area.

Member for Riverton Mike Nahan said the SMRC's response to the DEC report had been "grossly inadequate" and had focussed more on public relations than finding solutions to the identified problems.

He described the DEC's handling of the issue as "weak" and said its reluctance to close the facility meant residents would be forced to endure the odour for another summer.

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