

Canning Times

Community

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APRIL 10 - 16, 2007



Dollar Night
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Students excel in studies
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Works under way

Maintenance bill of \$584,000

By CARMELLE SANDER

MORE than half a million dollars will be spent replacing and upgrading the air ducting system at the South Metropolitan Regional Council's waste composting plant at Canning Vale.

The SMRC claims the upgrades are part of its ongoing maintenance, but residents and a former senior mechanical engineer of the plant believe the work is being done in response to the facility's ongoing odour problems.

The SMRC voluntarily shut the plant on Tuesday, March 27, just days after the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) issued it with a notice to fix the odour problems or face prosecution and closure.

Operators of the \$70 million Regional Resource Recovery Centre at Bannister Road have already spent millions upgrading its bio filters and air extraction system to combat foul odours.

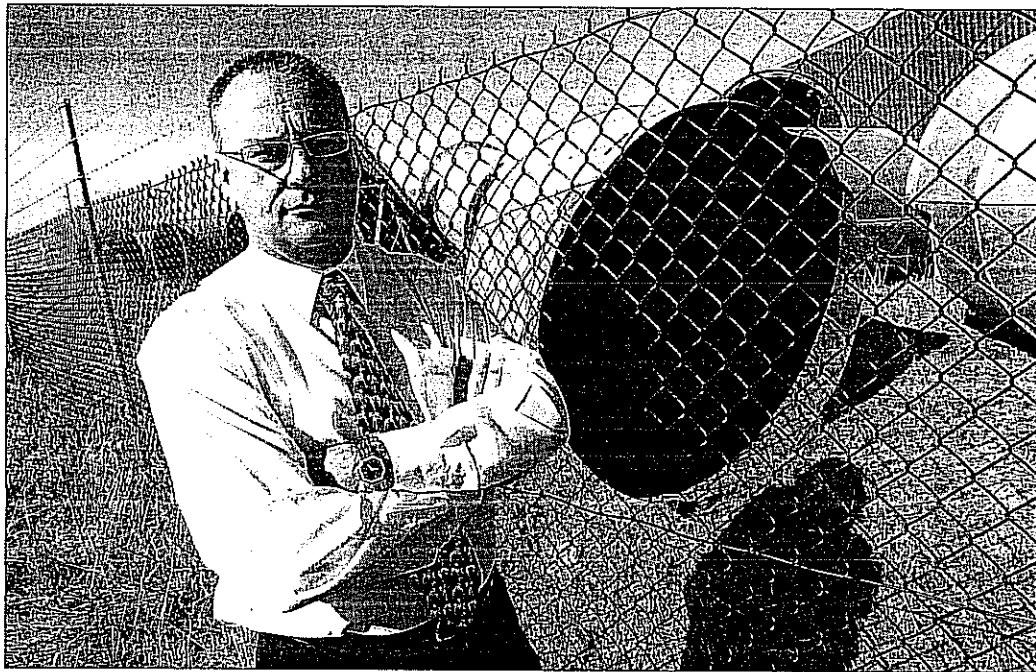
The latest works are expected to cost \$584,000 and are expected to take at least 150 days to complete.

It is believed the odorous collection system servicing the waste composting facility's tipping floor also needs to be replaced.

Canning Melville Odour Action Group founder Rod Olsen said the SMRC would have known about these works weeks before they voluntarily decided to stop accepting waste last month.

"The fact that they (SMRC) had already chosen a tender indicates that they knew for a while that they needed to upgrade the duct system," he said.

"Old ducting has been dumped near the



Simon Mykolajenko, of Willetton, in front of old duct pipes from the RRRRC. Picture: Marcelo Palacios

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fence line of the waste composting facility, covered in rust, dust and grime."

Christopher Boots, a former senior mechanical engineer at the plant said it appeared the SMRC was once again spending money on major upgrades and works.

"They are throwing money around like confetti," he said.

SMRC communications manager Chuck Ellis said the works were part of regular

planned maintenance at the waste composting facility, not part of the upgrades to the odour management system.

Mr Boots said the duct system was responsible for removing odours from the tipping floor.

"If these ducts have holes or cracks in them, odour is going to be released into the air," he said.

Willetton resident Simon Mykolajenko

said the odour from the plant was so strong last Wednesday, he felt as though he would vomit.

"We have been getting the odour, at an intolerable level, since about August last year," he said.

"It has reached a stage where enough is enough."

Inquiry call. See page 3

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Call for SMRC inquiry

By CARMELLE SANDER

THE State Opposition has called for a parliamentary inquiry into the controversial waste composting facility in Canning Vale.

Last week South Metropolitan Region MLC Simon O'Brien sponsored an urgency motion, calling for the Legislative Council to acknowledge community frustration over odours and the ineffectiveness of the State Government efforts to resolve the issue.

"I have received over 250 emails complaining about the stink," he said. "A standing committee inquiry will enable affected parties to take their complaints to the top level with the reassurance

that the committee can make recommendations to the government.

"The South Metropolitan Resource Centre will also be able to tell its side of the story and member councils of the SMRC will be able to make independent submissions."

Mr O'Brien said while the plant was responsible for the majority of waste disposal across the South Metropolitan Region, some residents were being seriously affected.

"The investment has cost local residents well over \$70 million, including \$2.4 million last year on replacing collapsed bio-filters. If the plant was closed it would be a very expensive mistake for the south metropolitan community to carry," he said.

Environment Minister David Temple-

man said the SMRC was yet to complete odour reduction works and confirm that it could manage odours satisfactorily at the site.

"I am well aware of the community concern regarding the SMRC facility," he said. "The Department of Environment and Conservation will not hesitate to take swift enforcement action should excessive odours remain after completion of these works."

He said the State Government was supportive of staving off the damaging effects of climate change, but believed the facility should not be allowed to remain in operation if it was to the detriment of the community.

The DEC closed the plant in December last year in response to odour complaints

from surrounding residents and business owners.

The facility was allowed to re-open at the start of February. At the end of last month the operators closed voluntarily, just days after the DEC issued them with a notice to fix the odour problems or face prosecution and closure.

The SMRC, which operates the centre at Bannister Road, has been in the spotlight for several months following a raft of odour complaints from residents in Willetton, Leeming, Canning Vale and Bull Creek.

It temporarily stopped receiving household waste from the cities of Canning, Melville, Cockburn, Fremantle and the Town of East Fremantle late last month in a bid to fix the ongoing odour problems.

Unit in full swing

YOUNG people suffering from a mental illness should expect to receive treatment sooner, following a \$1.1 million extension of the Bentley Hospital transition unit.

The extension, which was unveiled last week, has doubled the number of teenagers the unit can accommodate from 12 to 24.

State Health Minister Jim McGinty said people aged 12 to 18 with mental health problems attended treatment and guidance sessions at the unit to help them better integrate in the community.

"It is a positive, accepting environment where they can work out their priorities away from the pressures of their home or hospital ward," he said.

Patients can attend the unit up to four times a week, which is staffed by a team of health professionals.

Group sessions include physical exercise, self-expression, music and crafts and life skills.

Victoria Park MLA Ben Wyatt said it was especially important that teenagers who attended the unit had access to a schoolroom staffed by Hospital School Services.

"The HSS teachers play a key role in integrating these young people back into mainstream schooling," he said.

Jim McGinty with Dr Mark Rooney, Acting Director of Mental Health, at Bentley Hospital.

Picture: Justin Benson-Cooper a25852



IN BRIEF

Top cop nomination

PEOPLE in WA are encouraged to nominate a police officer who has shown a consistent and outstanding devotion above normal expectations for the Police Officer of the Year Award.

Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan said there were many officers who deserved recognition for their outstanding contribution to protecting and serving the community.

The award is to be presented on October 2.

For more information on the award or a nomination form, go to the WA Police website at www.police.wa.gov.au or contact Public Affairs on 9222 1225.

Heritage awards

A NEW category of the annual WA Heritage Council awards recognises people who make a significant achievement in the conservation or interpretation of a place listed in the State Register.

Nominations for the awards closed at 5pm on April 20.

Nomination forms could be found on the council's website (www.heritage.wa.gov.au). The awards will be announced on May 30 and inquiries can be made on 9221 4177.

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