

Search for alternative waste treatments could take 18 months

ARMIDALE Dumaresq mayor Brian Chetwynd has refuted any suggestion that council is dragging the chain in the investigation of alternative technologies for its proposed Waterfall Way landfill site.

The mayor also rejected an allegation that council's landfill process would create any sort of environmental risk.

The claims have come from the Gara Valley Environment Preservation Association, which has accused council of putting the World Heritage-listed Oxley Wild Rivers National Park

at greater risk by delaying a fact-finding tour on alternative waste treatment technologies.

Cr Chetwynd said council had to satisfy both State and Federal environmental agencies, which were hardly likely to approve any process which posed any risk to any part of the environment.

Association president John Hamel said the mayor had announced such a tour in September, but the group was still waiting on any action.

But Cr Chetwynd defended council's progress on the issue.

"We have contacted a number of areas - Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Port Stephens, Grafton and Eastern Creek - where some impact has been made with alternative waste management," he said.

"The next step will be to visit some of these sites, investigate what's available, where it is, and have discussions with those parties, then do our own research."

The investigation, he said, could take up to 18 months.

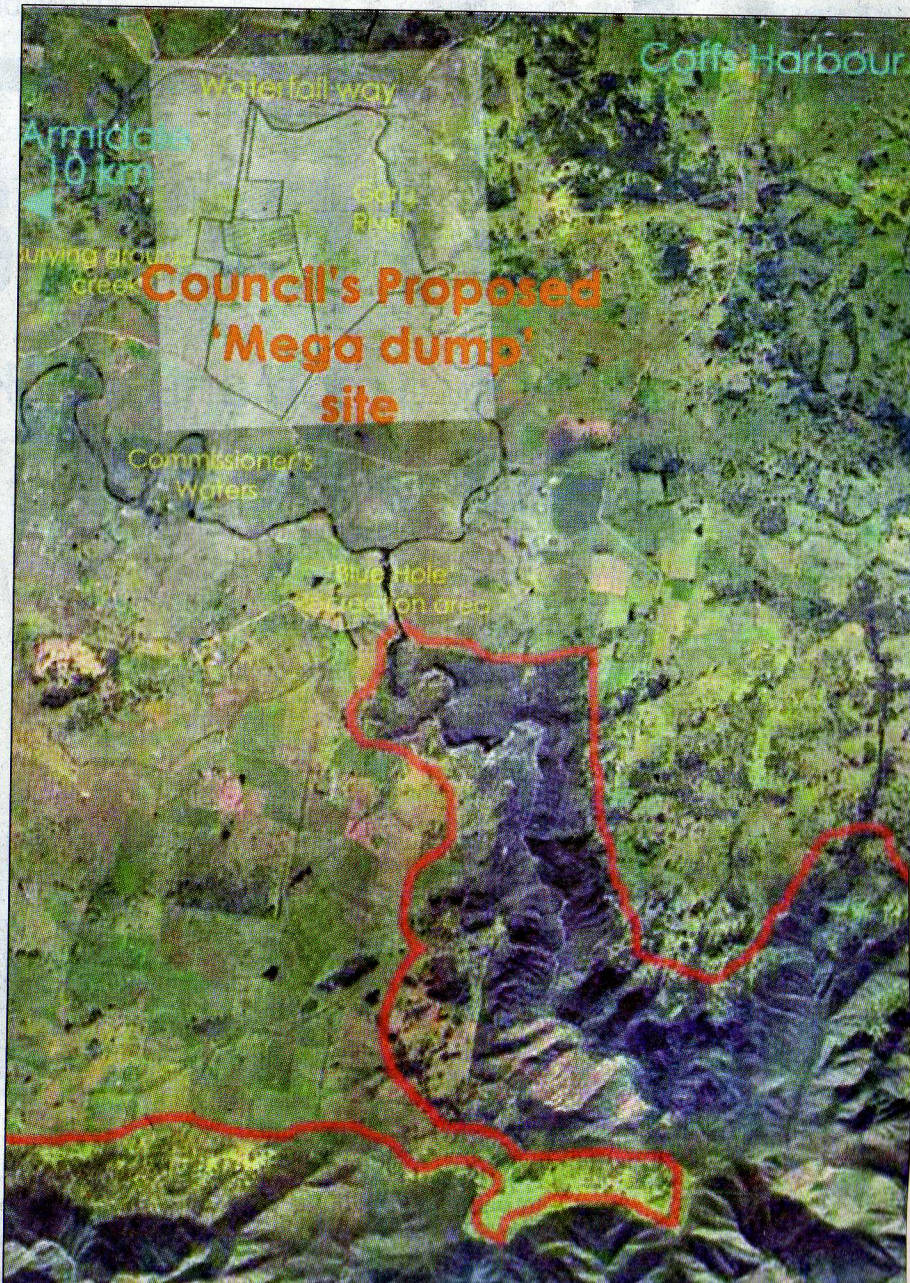
In the meantime, council had just allocated \$800,000 to extend by four years the life of the existing landfill site on Long Swamp Rd.

Mr Hamel claimed that, should the investigation find the alternative technologies to be not affordable or feasible, council would be under pressure to begin a new the search for an appropriate landfill site.

"The delay in organising the fact-finding tour reduces the time available for such a search," he said.

The delay also left council open to question about 'whether it is actually serious about using alternative waste treatment technologies.'

The Gara group has urged Cr Chetwynd to exercise leadership by abandoning the current proposed site and to actively seek regional cooperation in developing a long-term vision for the management of waste within the region.



DUMP DANGER: The Gara Valley Environment Preservation Association fears that a delay in council's fact-finding tour on alter-