

# ADC Councillor calls for immediate review of proposed new Landfill site



Councillor Herman Beyersdorf Chair of Council's Waste Management Committee

Councillor Herman Beyersdorf has called for a moratorium on further work or preparations on the current new Landfill site on Waterfall Way until a full independent review can be undertaken of the suitability or otherwise of this proposed site.

Cr Beyersdorf was reacting to a "Referral Decision", a document of five pages, of the former Federal Department of the Environment and Water Resources (now the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts or DEWHA) dated November 8, 2007, but not made available to Councillors (as part of a lengthy documentation of several hundred pages) until July 2, 2008.

"I feel extremely disappointed that I, as Chair of Council's Waste Management Committee, was not made fully aware of this document until very recently," Cr Beyersdorf said. "Prior to this date, we had only been made aware of a one-page document entitled "Referral Decision - Controlled Action", and it was implied that this "Controlled Action" was only another routine bureaucratic hurdle."

"A close reading of the entire document, however, reveals that, at the very least, DEWHA has major concerns about many aspects of the proposed site.

"In particular, the Commonwealth Department's "Reasons for Decision" included that "... a number of World Heritage and National Heritage values are likely to be significantly adversely affected by the proposal to establish a landfill adjacent to the Gara River".

"The assessment also found that "the proponent's [ie ADC's] contention that World Heritage and National Heritage values will not be affected by the proposal was not supported by the information provided in the referral".

"While these observations obviously could be attempted to be rebutted in an on-going approval

process, I am afraid that the fact that this five-page assessment was effectively hidden from Councillors and the Waste Management Committee, as well as from the general public, including residents potentially directly affected by this scheme, does not give me any confidence in the process so far, and I call upon Council to halt any further progressing of this particular proposal until it has been subject to a thorough transparent public review," Cr Beyersdorf said.

"Council needs, as a matter of urgency, to look at other options, which are less sensitive environmentally. In addition to progressing Alternative Waste Technology (AWT) as a matter of urgency, which would reduce and stabilise the waste going into Landfill, Council needs to have a look at whether the present Landfill at Long Swamp Road can be extended for a longer life-span if a suitable AWT is introduced in the next 12 months or so, otherwise Council needs to look at landfill sites again in areas less environmentally sensitive than the Gara River/Oxley National Park and World Heritage area.

"As the ultimate aim is for a truly regional landfill, Council should be looking for a suitable site not only in the Armidale Dumaresq area, but also in the neighbouring shires of Uralla and Guyra, bearing in mind that any future landfill (or extension of the existing landfill) should be a Class 2 Landfill, that is, not containing putrescible waste producing leachates and methane gas.

"As Councils have been instructed by the Department of Local Government that they are in "caretaker mode" from August 4 till the election, I realise that the outgoing Council is probably unable to make such a decision at this time, so I call on the new Council that will take office after the election of September to address this as a matter of high priority," Cr Beyersdorf concluded.