

EPA Victoria

C/- works.approvals@epa.vic.gov.au

RE: Chunxing Corporation Pty. Ltd. (ULAB) #1003702

Dear Sir/Madam,

In 2016 in response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries, the Latrobe Valley was designated a Health Innovation Zone by the Victorian government to support communities in Latrobe to improve their health and wellbeing. It gives voice to community aspirations in the planning and delivering of better health and wellbeing outcomes, and where a process of co-design with individuals and organisations is actively encouraged.

The Latrobe Health Advocate was appointed by the Victorian Minister for Health in May 2018, to offer independent advice on behalf of Latrobe communities to improve health and wellbeing service systems in Latrobe City. The role provides community-wide leadership for the Latrobe Health innovation Zone while maintaining a focus on strategic outcomes and systemic change.

In my role I promote the position that Health is Everyone's Business. I have been encouraged by the willingness of businesses in Latrobe to consider and prioritise the health and wellbeing of communities as they develop new enterprises and reflect on how their practices can support good mental and physical health both within their workforce and the communities in which they are located.

Since the establishment of the Latrobe Health Advocate's office I have engaged regularly with businesses within Latrobe, including ENGIE and Australian Paper on matters that have the potential to impact on the health and wellbeing of Latrobe communities. In 2019 I was appointed as the independent Chair of the Latrobe Valley Asbestos Taskforce. The taskforce brings together government agencies, local council, unions and community groups to work together to deliver the best outcomes for the Latrobe Valley.

My aim is to influence development projects in terms of how they:

- Create a healthy community
- Impact on climate change and the determinants of health and
- Do not adversely affect community health

In line with the priorities of my role, I am pleased to provide this submission to the Environment Protection Authority as it considers a works approval application from Chunxing Corporation Pty. Ltd. for a proposed development of a used lead acid battery (ULAB) recycling plant.

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Along with staff from my office, I have attended a series of information sessions and community meetings related to the proposed ULAB recycling plant. I have also met with the proponent and community members individually. These meetings have also been promoted on the Latrobe Health Advocate social media platforms and communities encouraged to attend.

The response to these meetings has been mixed with people for and against the proposal attending.

In the main, questions were raised about the safe operations of the plant and the practices associated with waste removal. Other commentary included:

- People expressing support for the employment opportunities that are promised by the proponent and for the associated economic benefits of increased employment in the area.
- People expressing concerns around the proposal voicing lack of trust in the information being provided to them by the proponent and in the testing and enforcement processes of the EPA.
- People also expressing concern around the cumulative impact of lead and other chemicals on the soil and air quality, given the expected emissions.
- People expressing concerns around the impact on property values.
- People expressing concerns around the immediate impact on people's mental health of the application process and the proposal as a whole.

In conversations with individuals, I have heard:

- People were concerned about the lack of community consultation and I encouraged both the proponent and the EPA to increase the amount of consultation.
- People are looking for guarantees on the safety of emissions.
- People are expressing concern around the impact that the proposed project would have on the work being done to transition Latrobe City into cleaner industries and "21st century jobs".
- People are expressing concerns around the fire preparedness of the proposed facility.

In considering the proposed works approval application of Chunxing Corporation Pty. Ltd. I recommend:

- The EPA satisfies itself that the proponent has provided sufficient opportunity for communities to be consulted about the proposal.
- That the EPA consider the cumulative impact of the release of stated emissions on the existing soil and air quality in Latrobe.
- That the EPA consider the psychological impacts of the approval process on those people who have raised concerns around the proposal and work to mitigate those impacts by maintaining a transparent process and evidence informed communication strategies to prevent unintended harm.

Regards,



Jane Anderson
Latrobe Health Advocate

