

Latrobe City Council

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RE: Planning permit application for used lead and acid battery recycling facility

Dear Latrobe City Councillors,

In 2016, in response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries, the Latrobe City LGA was designated a Health Innovation Zone by the Victorian Government to support local communities to improve their health and wellbeing. It gives voice to community aspirations in the planning and delivery of better health and wellbeing outcomes and is 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, government planning and decision-making processes 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 Latrobe City Council as it considers a planning permit application from Chunxing Corporation Pty. Ltd. for a proposed development of a used lead acid battery (ULAB) recycling plant.

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 have been encouraged to attend. The response to these meetings has been mixed with people expressing views for and against the proposal.

In my recent submission (attached) to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) I outlined the views of communities and questions that people were asking. I also included three recommendations;

- 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.

I have since received direct briefings from the EPA and studied the report from the recent Latrobe City Council community information session.

In response to the concerns raised by local communities I have asked the EPA questions about the cumulative impact on air quality in Latrobe, the potential for lead leaching to ground water and onwards, the application of Standards, the ability for EPA to enforce and prevent problems, ongoing community engagement and public reporting.

I now offer the following feedback and considerations to Latrobe City Council;

- Latrobe communities have shown significant interest in this proposal, demonstrated their ability to have their voice and highlighted the importance of achieving economic outcomes for the region without compromising community health and wellbeing.
- It is essential that governments and industry continue to be responsive to the concerns and aspirations of communities and to involve communities throughout decision making and industrial development processes. I understand that the voices of Latrobe communities have influenced;
 - The commissioning of a human health impact assessment by EPA
 - The appointment of an international expert to work with EPA to review the proposal and EPA processes
 - The requirement from EPA for Chunxing Corporation to establish adequate community engagement structures and continue to hear from communities as a condition of the Works Approval
- The report outlining the questions asked at the community information session and response from Latrobe City Council is a good example of demonstrating how to listen to, acknowledge and provide feedback on the views of communities. If a planning permit is granted, can Latrobe City Council support the applicant with ongoing community engagement approaches?
- I understand that in making its assessment the EPA has applied the National Environment Protection Measure 2016 Standards which is a standard consistent with expectations of the World Health

Organisation. The EPA has advised me that the USA and Canada Standards are a higher benchmark that do not legally apply but assessed that the potential pollution measures were within those standards.

- I understand that in relation to the cumulative impact of the release of stated emissions on the existing soil and air quality in Latrobe, the EPA is satisfied that pre-existing / background pollution has been taken into account.
- The EPA has indicated that if a planning permit is granted, in addition to monitoring emissions from lead, it will monitor air quality, dust particles and sulphur dioxide. I understand that the regional EPA office in Traralgon will contribute to this. Should a planning permit be granted this could be an opportunity for Latrobe City Council to partner with the EPA and local communities to utilise the air quality monitoring network that has been established in Latrobe.

Regardless of the decision about a planning permit for Chunxing Corporation, I welcome the opportunity to work with Latrobe City Council into the future to bring about systemic change within all levels of government to ensure that community voices are heard and that health and wellbeing outcomes are prioritised as an integral aspect of planning scheme processes and economic development decisions.

Regards,



Jane Anderson
Latrobe Health Advocate

