

Statement from the Latrobe Health Advocate

I want to recognise the significant interest of Hazelwood North residents and local communities who continue to share their views about the proposed used lead and acid battery recycling facility in the Latrobe Valley.

Over the past twelve months I have heard people express views for and against the battery recycling plant proposal, with most people opposed to it in its current format. Those in favour have expressed support for the economic and employment benefits the facility can bring to the region and those opposed are fearful about potential health and environmental impacts.

I can see the effect that this proposal is having on some members of the community and want to acknowledge the feelings of distress and fear that people may be experiencing. People are aware that exposure to lead is harmful to human health and that there is no known safe level of lead exposure.

Understandably, local communities want to be informed about industrial developments that are occurring, they want to know about potential health and environmental risks, and they are seeking reassurance from government and industry that their health and wellbeing will be protected.

There is a clear expectation within the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone that community views will be acknowledged and that Local and State Government decision making processes will have an appropriate degree of transparency.

In line with the terms of reference for my role as the Latrobe Health Advocate, I act in the best interests of the Latrobe Valley community, maintaining a focus on health system improvement and remaining impartial in relation to the interests of individual services and agencies. I promote the position that health is everyone's business. My aim is to influence development projects, government planning and decision-making processes in terms of how they:

- Actively involve communities in the design and decision-making process
- Create a healthy community
- Impact on climate change and the determinants of health and
- Do not adversely affect community health

During the planning application process for this development I have made submissions to the [Environmental Protection Authority](#) (EPA) and [Latrobe City Council](#) (LCC). These are publicly available on my website.

Latrobe Valley communities are experiencing an economic transition. As Victoria and the world move towards renewable energy, the local economy is changing. It is vital that local communities are supported during this time. Current and future Latrobe Valley residents must be afforded the opportunity to contribute to economic development decisions that will directly impact them.

It is clear to me that local communities want to work towards a thriving economy where jobs are created, and the region can prosper. They want to achieve this without compromising community health and wellbeing. It is on this basis that I have provided the following advice to government:

- **the Victorian Government acts to inform Latrobe Valley communities, with some sense of urgency, the rationale for the Planning Minister's decision.**
- **the Victorian Government guarantees the ongoing role of its respective departments, the environment sector and health sector in relation to this specific industrial development with a view to;**
 - **ensure ongoing and coordinated community engagement and education**
 - **prevent and monitor environmental contamination**
 - **protect and monitor the health of workers, school children and communities;**

This advice has been provided to the Victorian Minister for Health and I welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussions with the Minister, other government representatives and local communities about this matter into the future.



Jane Anderson

Latrobe Health Advocate

January 15, 2021