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Materials Recycling Facility Fyshwick
EIS Application Number: 201700053

Submission opposing the EIS to the Director-General for Planning

This is a submission in opposition to the MRF based on the real risk of a serious waste fire in Fyshwick, an issue which was not adequately addressed in the draft EIS;201700053. The EIS failed to examine the context of waste fires in MRFs and WTS generally and discuss their environment, social and economic impacts.

Most people in Canberra would remember the Mitchell fire and the fires at Pialligo cement recycling business. Like most fires in waste facilities they caused severe disruption to the community, cost a lot of money and used up valuable resources. The Mitchell fire because it was at a facility handling hazardous waste forced the closure of streets and schools and involved a very expensive clean up. Waste station fires can be hazardous for both operator and the environment.

The vast and varied nature of materials dealt with at transfer stations and recycling facilities make them high-risk when it comes to fire safety. Waste is potentially flammable when stored: self-combustion, heat development due to pressure, spontaneous chemical reactions between the disposals, methane gas-build up, are potential fire creators. Organic waste can be susceptible to spontaneous combustion particularly in the hot Australian summer months. Lithium batteries in the waste stream are particularly dangerous.

The UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures report prepared for the Hazardous Waste section of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment 2016, titled *Waste Fires in Australia Cause for Concern?* reveals some alarming facts about the incidence of waste fires, their causes and costs to the economy and community. It revealed that in 2105 there were 5,652 rubbish fires in NSW. On the metal recycling site 13 Lithgow Street there have been seven fires in the three years between 2014 and 2017. The report says *"The direct economic costs incurred by waste fires include: property damage, fire-fighting personnel time, fire-fighting consumables and equipment, waste facility downtime, environmental clean-up costs contaminated water supplies and long- term health effects. Indirect costs include traffic delays, public transport disruption, disruption to daily working schedules and lower real-estate values. Waste fires burn for extended periods, sometimes days and weeks, and can take significant resources to extinguish. Fire-fighting personnel who are engaged in extinguishing these fires are then not available to respond to fire emergencies occurring elsewhere. This has the effect of increasing response times and increasing fire risks elsewhere in the region."*

Since the Government is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the people of the Territory I believe that in this case the most stringent planning approach needs to be adopted. In view of the expense incurred, the dangers to the fire fighters and other personnel involved, the disruption and the health and safety risks highlighted by the past ACT incidents it is clear that this proposal should be rejected on this site. If it were necessary at all, it must be located elsewhere in the ACT.

The numbers of fires in recycling waste facilities as revealed in this report confirms that the Waste Transfer Station at Fyshwick, unnecessary to meet the needs of the ACT, merely adds another potentially dangerous industry to a precinct which should not have to and cannot sustain it.

Sincerely