



Meeting to bolster local recycling industry

30 October 2019

People who attended a community information meeting in Hazelwood North last night heard of the steps being taken to develop a strong recycling industry in the Latrobe Valley.

It was the third open community information meeting held by Chunxing Corporation that proposes to construct and operate a Used Lead Acid Battery (ULAB) recycling facility at the site of the Gippsland Heavy Industry Park Infrastructure Project in Hazelwood North.

More than 160 community members attended the meeting, facilitated by independent Chair of Regional Development Victoria (Gippsland), Richard Elkington.

Attendees first listened to a presentation by former local and Managing Director of Ascend Waste and Environment, Geoff Latimer, who has been engaged by Chunxing to model the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Mr Latimer said he was keen to have had the opportunity to present the facts about the proposal.

“We understand the concerns coming from those within the community,” Mr Latimer said. “People are genuinely worried for their health and safety and we acknowledge this comes from an historical and emotional context.”

Backed by the second largest recycler of lead acid batteries in the world, Chunxing Resource Recycling Group, emissions control technology that would be used at the Hazelwood North facility would be the most advanced available in the world.

“The safety of people and the environment is at the forefront of the facility’s design and is built into the standards it must meet to be allowed to operate,” Mr Latimer explained. “Air emissions (such as lead) from the proposed facility are modelled to be so low, they would be below measurable levels.”

Mr Latimer also explained the strict regulatory process that Chunxing must adhere to in the planning, construction and operation phases of the project.

CEO and Director of Chunxing Corporation, Dr Lakshman Jayaweera, said he was overwhelmed by the number of people who attended the meeting who represented a diverse range of views.

“It was invaluable to hear all sides, the for and against,” Dr Jayaweera said, “and we are committed to going above and beyond regulatory requirements to ensure the community is well-informed throughout the process.”

The formal stakeholder consultation process begins once the project’s Works Approval application is submitted to the EPA. Chunxing is yet to finalise and submit its application and therefore, is not required to have engaged the community as yet. However, this was its third community meeting.



“We held two open community meetings in Morwell in June this year as a means of starting a conversation with the local community and since then, Geoff and I have had more than 20 meetings with local stakeholders,” Dr Jayaweera explained.

“We have also met with the Action Group on at least five occasions. We have been nothing but open and transparent, and that’s how we plan to continue.”

Dr Jayaweera travelled to the Chunxing battery recycling facility in China in September this year to discuss the feasibility of responding to community concerns around reducing emission levels even further. His meeting with plant engineers resulted in the development of an optimised emissions system. Already now engaged at the China facility, this new emissions system will be incorporated into an improved Hazelwood design.

Dr Jayaweera said Chunxing was committed to ongoing consultation, including the potential to establish a community committee that would work alongside the company to monitor and guide operations.

The proposed Hazelwood facility would turn 50,000 tonnes of spent batteries into 28,000 tonnes of refined lead per year, replacing the current practice of exporting waste overseas and creating full-time, local jobs.

“Latrobe Valley could be a world-leader in the modern battery recycling industry,” Dr Jayaweera said, “and we can’t even begin to demonstrate the economic benefits that would result.”

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