

NON-METROPOLITAN LANDFILLS

Presentation by Dr Paul Vogel, Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority

1. Background

At its meeting on 1 December 2004, the Minister's Local Government Forum agreed that the topic of non-metropolitan landfills be placed on the Forum agenda.

This paper provides

- an overview and update of activities; and,
- proposes that the Forum endorse the audit of costing on selected non-metropolitan landfill facilities managed by councils to better inform the development and implementation of the revised draft EPA Landfill Guidelines and support waste management decision making in Local Government.

2. Actions

In response to inclusion in the Forum agenda, the Office of Local Government [OLG] initiated discussions with representatives of the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], Zero Waste SA [ZWSA], and the Local Government Association [LGA] to discuss how the Forum may best assist with this topic.

2.1 Current Status

The *Environment Protection Act 1993* provides for compliance and licensing of landfills. In March 2004, the EPA released revised draft Landfill Facility Guidelines [revised draft Guidelines] for comment over an 8-month period.

In country areas most landfills are managed by councils and there has been a diverse range of past management practices of non-metropolitan landfills. The draft revised Guidelines present a change for some councils, however, the revised draft Guidelines have been developed in response to a number of factors including communities requesting more environmentally sustainable waste management practices of landfills and to improve practices across the board.

Non-metropolitan councils and Local Government regional organisations have particularly expressed concern about the costs of compliance and timelines for implementation of the revised draft EPA Guidelines.

The EPA Board has recently resolved to form a waste management working group with Stephen Hains as the Chairperson.

2.2 Three key activities:

2.2.1 Technical issues – revised draft Guidelines

The EPA's consultation processes includes:

- last year, presenting the revised draft Guidelines at various Local Government forums;
- establishing a Landfill Guidelines Working Party, comprising representatives of EPA, Industry, ZWSA, and 2 LGA nominees (Wakefield RC and Barossa Council) to consider the revised draft Guidelines; and
- attending the February 2005 South Australian Regional Organisations of Councils [SAROC] to discuss the revised draft Guidelines; and
- Participating in the LGA's Regional Landfills Forum on 31 March 2005.

The EPA has incorporated changes to the March 2004 revised draft Guidelines and further consultation is currently underway, **until 15 April 2005**.

Consistent with the *State-Local Government Relations Agreement*, the LGA is managing consultation processes with Local Government including:

- obtaining preliminary technical advice on the revised draft Guidelines and supplying this to the EPA's Landfill Guidelines Working Party for its January 2005 meeting;
- convening a Regional Landfills Forum on 31 March 2005 to provide councils with an opportunity to discuss issues;
- encouraging councils to contribute comments on the revised draft Guidelines to the LGA;
- seeking technical advice on the revised draft Guidelines with a view to providing this advice to councils and regional LGA's during the consultation period;
- advising that the LGA Waste Committee is playing a leadership role in relation to the revised draft Guidelines and is to provide advice to the LGA Executive Committee regarding the LGA submission.

2.2.2 Implementation issues

A 5-year (transitional) implementation timeline is envisaged, which is aligned with the State Waste Strategy/Waste Management Plans. Moreover, any implementation plan will need to take into account current regional waste management planning initiatives by Local Government.

ZWSA is contributing funds to the development of Regional Local Government Association Regional Plans. Eyre Peninsula LGA and South East Local Government Association are advanced in their Regional Plans. Central Local Government Region and the Murray and Mallee Local Government Association have recently commenced preparing Regional Plans. The Regional Plans are considering features of the waste stream hierarchy aimed at reducing disposal to landfill facilities.

In terms of landfill facilities, the Regional Plans include identifying which landfills should remain open, which should close, possible future regional landfill facilities in the context of an integrated approach to management of the total waste stream.

2.2.3 Clarity of costing

As a result of discussions between the EPA, LGA, ZWSA and OLG representatives, the notion of a landfill audit arose with a focus squarely on landfill facilities and the costs of compliance.

The proposed project is a joint initiative of the Local Government Association of SA and the Government of SA, through the EPA, ZWSA and the Forum. The audit seeks to provide both the EPA and Local Government with sound information of:

- (a) an assessment of the costs to non-metropolitan councils of landfill in complying to **existing** landfill license conditions and Landfill Environmental Plans [LEMPs], and,
- (b) estimated cost of compliance to meet the **revised draft EPA Landfill Guidelines**.

The above representatives established a Project Reference Group to develop a proposed project brief for a consultant to undertake an independent selected audit of landfill facilities involving 4-6 council case studies. Consultation with the selected non-metropolitan councils and on-site visits form part of the project schedule. The joint project is to be managed by the LGA, with support from EPA, ZWSA and the Forum.

The LGA is seeking expressions of interest (until 4 April 2005) from non-metropolitan councils that own and operate landfills to participate in the audit.

3. Recommendations

That the Minister's Local Government Forum:

- 1. Note the verbal report from Dr Paul Vogel, Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority;**
- 2. Endorse the concept of an audit of selected non-metropolitan council landfill facilities, as set out in the proposed draft brief; and**
- 3. Request that a progress report be provided to the Forum at its next meeting.**