

## Environmental Regulation - Recycal Pty Ltd, Rocherlea

### Background

- Recycal Pty Ltd operates a scrap metal processing facility at 256 George Town Road, Rocherlea.
- In 2019, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in consultation with Launceston City Council, assumed regulatory responsibility for the site due to excessive and large-scale scrap metal stockpiling. This stockpiling posed a range of significant environmental risks, including fire and discharge of contaminated stormwater from the site to nearby land and waterways.
- Since that time, the EPA has taken multiple compliance and enforcement actions in response to ongoing, serious non-compliance by Recycal with the environmental requirements of its permit, including issuing Environment Protection Notices and imposing fines. The non-compliances largely relate to excessive stockpiling and associated fire risk, contaminated waste management, discharge of polluted stormwater from the site and failure to control dust emissions.
- The EPA is also investigating Recycal for several alleged offences under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* and will refer these matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- Efforts by the EPA to regulate the site have been affected by Recycal lodging appeals to the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT) and to the Supreme Court. Both upheld the requirements imposed by the EPA for the control of pollution at the site.

## Environmental Contamination associated with Shredder Floc

### Shredder floc at Recycal Rocherlea

- Recycal receives diverse scrap metal items at the Rocherlea site, which are fed through a large metal shredder. The shredding process recovers magnetic metals and produces by-products collectively called shredder floc. Shredder floc contains metals, hydrocarbons, plastics, wood, rubber, foam, soil and fine particles of those contaminants.
- Testing of shredder floc by the EPA indicates this material is a controlled waste under Tasmanian law due to high levels of contamination with metals, hydrocarbons, and other harmful substances. Some of these substances, such as lead, are toxic or eco-toxic with potential to adversely affect human and animal health, and the environment. Shredder floc is also highly combustible.
- Shredder floc production at the Rocherlea site commenced in a limited way in late 2019, with shredder floc stockpiled in a large storage shed. Over 2021, the large shed became filled with shredder floc. A significant fire occurred in the shredder floc shed in February 2022.
- Progressively over 2022-23, shredder floc was moved out of the shed and into the Rocherlea yard, including for reprocessing through the shredder and further processing in other equipment to recover non-metallic metals.

### Shredder floc dust testing

- Concerned by increasing risk of contaminated dust from uncovered shredder floc stockpiles and the shredder moving offsite, the EPA conducted preliminary dust sampling on nearby premises in August and October 2023.

- Testing results showed metals, including lead, were present in the dust above background levels. The concentration of lead was highest in samples collected closest to Recycal, and lower in samples collected further away.
- The Director of Public Health determined that the dust sampling results indicated potential public health risks in the Rocherlea industrial area, noting there is no safe level of lead in the human body, Public Health Services urgently commenced a range of actions in January 2024 to provide clear and proportionate advice to persons in the area likely to be exposed to the dust now and in the recent past.

## Control of Shredder Floc Dust – Current EPA Actions

- The EPA issued an Environment Protection Notice to Recycal Pty Ltd on 1 February 2024 requiring it to control the risk of offsite movement of shredder floc dust by:
  - Immediately ceasing production of shredder floc
  - Immediately ceasing processing of shredder floc
  - Removing or covering all shredder floc on the Rocherlea site.
- The EPA will attend the Recycal Rocherlea site to check and enforce compliance with the Environment Protection Notice.
- The EPA is also commissioning, in collaboration with Public Health Services, an independent, more detailed environmental testing in the vicinity of Recycal's Rocherlea facility to determine human health risks and inform any additional compliance actions by the EPA, and actions by Public Health Services.

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