



**The Greater
Dandenong
Environment
Group Inc.**

Newsletter!

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Insectivores of the Night

This was a Greening Australia training session at their offices in Heidelberg. The presenter was Lindy Lumsden, who has probably earned the title of Victoria's bat lady. She gave a slide show of a variety of bats with a commentary that was both technical and understandable. She had erected four harp traps before the talk so after the talk and a cuppa we went to see the results. It was not a good bat night - the wind was strong with the odd rain squall - so most sensible bats stayed at home. She did catch four not so bright ones that had ventured out, making the night a success for the people who had never seen a small bat before. I don't know which bats were caught because I, and a couple of other Field Nats who had made the pilgrimage to hear Lindy speak, started packing up the traps and the bats were caught in the later ones.

Bats at Braeside

I attended two bat evenings at Braeside Park in December. One was a Field Nats night at which we caught 55 bats of 7 species including the Eastern Broad Nosed Bat. Melbourne is as far west as this bat ranges, so it was good to catch it in a reasonably urban situation. When we were setting up, we saw two Sugar Gliders launch from the top of a tree and glide quite a distance to a feed tree. That's the beauty of this work - you just never know what will happen.

The following week we helped with a bat awareness evening with the Friends group. This was not so good with only 25 bats caught of 5 species. One item of interest that we learnt was that there are ways to separate the *Vespadelus* species which are small and similar. The cheat sheets explain that the male bats have different shaped penises that can be seen by rolling back the foreskin. One can imagine how easy this is on an animal that weighs about 4gms. We had to leave this operation to the more manually dexterous among us to achieve a result. I might add that it was all done in the best possible taste with no silly comments.

Public Meetings

I attended two public meetings at Dandenong High School on the 18th and 19th Dec. The State Government has decided that contaminated soil, which constitutes about 35% of the total waste going to land fill, should be treated and reused instead of being dumped. This, as most people would agree, is a very laudable proposal and will come into effect in two years time. They have set up a committee to investigate sites and methods to achieve their aim of processing the soil and are asking the community for input as part of this process.

The first proposal was by BP to treat contaminated soil from their petrol stations when they decommission them. In Western Australia they achieve this on land near their refinery so they have experience with the method. In Dandenong they propose to take the process a step

further by doing the processing in a building for petrol contaminated soil and outside for diesel contaminated soils. The complete process involves laying out the soil on the concrete floor to a depth of 6 inches (15cms) and aerating it by tilling. This allows the natural bacteria to break down the hydrocarbon contaminants and after two months the soil can be returned to be used as fill from whence it came.

Petrol contaminants evaporate which is why they are treated in an enclosed area from which the air can be extracted and cleaned by scrubbers (these are still being developed but there seems to be little problem with the technology).

The diesel contaminated soil will be treated outside in bunded areas with protection from flooding and regular spraying to prevent dust from being produced and the same aeration system being used. The diesel takes longer to degrade so the process takes at least a month longer.

Representatives of Cleenaway addressed the second meeting. This proposal was to site a soil recycling facility in Dandenong South. They have some problems with their site. There are exclusion criteria for these sites; some are elastic, others are fixed. The fixed ones are called Primary Exclusion Criteria. These eliminate sites that are outside Victorian legislation, such as Commonwealth and interstate lands, established residential areas, National Parks, locations prohibited under state environmental policy and designated water catchment areas.

The second set of criteria, known as Secondary Exclusion Criteria, have a proviso that allows exemption if the same measure of protection can be assured in other ways. These cover buffer requirements, flooding, waterways, endangered species, and effects on agriculture.

The Cleenaway site does not meet the buffer requirements currently required, but since they are in the business of waste management they have put up a proposal. I think that in many ways this is new ground and the companies need to put something on the table to stay in the ground. Cleenaway take this project seriously enough to have their director responsible for their operations in almost all of Australia to fly back from West Australia for the meeting.

Their facility will treat various types of waste soil whereas the BP site was for just hydrocarbons. Cleenaway wish to treat soil contaminated by other industrial processes. It is proposed that organic contaminated soils will be treated by Thermal Desorption. The soil will be heated to cause the contaminants to become a gas, which is then oxidised and made harmless. The by-product can be used as clean fill.

Inorganic contaminants will be separated from the soil by mechanical means and then immobilised by chemical fixation, where solidification reagents are added to produce a rigid mass that can then be stored in a proper facility.

Cleenaway proposes to undertake these activities in enclosed buildings, storing the soils in bunded areas with proper environmental protection *eg* water sprays, analysis of storm water prior to release etc.

It was emphasised that the waste is considered to be low level. There will be a reduction of this type of waste being dumped at Lyndhurst where, because there is no processing it will remain a threat to the environment by leachate for many years. I thought that was a step in the right direction and if encouraged could lead to a situation probably many years down the track for us to even dig up old land fill site and process the waste that was previously buried in them. OK, I can dream, can't I! I was rather disappointed by the reaction from the local community. Were they pleased that there was going to be less pollution going into the tip at Lyndhurst? At least one of them was a vigorous anti-tip campaigner. Were they happy that

such a low level of hazardous industry was going to use up space that something far more toxic could occupy? No, of course not. We had the usual people promoting the usual nimby line. Put it somewhere else away in the bush. There are only two Offensive Industry zones in Melbourne, we have one of them. It will be very difficult for the government to set up another and they will not change the status of the existing ones so we are stuck with ours. In my opinion we should fill it with the most benign industries we can find to exclude the bad ones that we really don't want.

Council Forum

There is a forum in Springvale Council offices on **27th Feb** about the Offensive Zone. More details later or phone me nearer the date when I would hope to have more details.

Field Naturalists at Little River

I'm leading a survey trip to the Earth Sanctuaries Site at Little River on the weekend of the **2/3 Feb** mainly looking for small mammals and reptiles. I will know more about camping etc. nearer the date. I intend to lead a side trip to a pub for a meal on Sat night. So you can come for a weekend or a day if you want.

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