

# urbaine architecture pty ltd

Date: **6.6.2018**

Project: **Eastern Creek Energy from Waste Facility (SSD6236 – D510/18).**

## **Assessment of Response to DPE Assessment Report – dated 21.5.2018.**

The document 'Response to DPE Assessment Report', (Next Gen Response) prepared by Urbis, on behalf of The Next Generation NSW Pty Ltd, seeks to address many of the major concerns relating to the refusal of planning permission for the new Eastern Creek Energy from Waste Facility.

Urbaine Architecture was previously engaged by Jacfin Pty Ltd to review the original Development Application, the amended Environmental Impact Statement, the Response to Submissions Report and the Department's Assessment Report.

Urbaine understands that the proposal has now been referred to the IPC for determination and that, in addition to Jacfin's submission to the IPC, the IPC is willing to accept supplementary comments from Jacfin in response to the Next Gen's Response to the Department's Assessment Report.

Urbaine has now been engaged to undertake a review of the Next Gen's Response and advise whether any statements are incorrect, or misconstrue, or misrepresent the conclusions in the Department's Assessment Report.

We have only been provided with five working days, excluding the due date for comments by Jacfin, to provide our comments in respect of our review.

Urbaine has identified the following matters for the Independent Planning Commission's consideration:

**1.** In the opening summary of the Next Gen Response, describing the proposal, Urbis firstly highlights the option for future expansion of the facility, if needed. Since the current proposal already imposes significant visual impact on the neighbouring residential areas, the potential impact from an extension of this facility would be significant, particularly given it would be entirely to the Western side of the proposed site, as a result of the current design abutting the Eastern boundary. Critically, there is no visual assessment of any expanded facility provided.

**2.** In the opening summary, Urbis states:

'The proposal is located approximately 997 metres from the Minchinbury residential area to the north and approximately 994 metres from the Erskine Park residential area to the west. The topography of the site minimises the visual impact.'

It is misleading to state that the site topography minimises the visual impact. The proposed development sits in an elevated position, relative to the residential areas, and no consideration has been given, by The Next Gen, to screening of the building, nor for minimising its visual impact through its location on the site.

The plant would be clearly visible from the residential areas, as a result of its scale and elevated site position. Urbaine's previous photomontages, illustrate the significant visual impact of the proposed facility.

**3.** In Section 2.1.4, Urbis states:

'The location is well separated from residential localities. The development has been designed to respond to the site's natural topography minimising the visual impact of the facility from the public domain and nearby sensitive land uses.'

Visually, the separation is not considerable for a building of this scale, in relation to the residential amenities surrounding the site. It is considerably taller than any buildings on the adjoining business / industrial park. Regarding the statement: 'responding to the site's natural topography', this is not the case, being located, at the proposal's Northern end, on the highest location on the site. The building increases in height from North to South, hence only increasing its visibility in relation to the site's topography, which slopes down towards the South.

The statements have the potential to mislead and do not appear to reflect the design that is currently proposed. Urbaine's previous photomontages, illustrate the significant visual impact of the proposed facility.

**4.** In Section 4.5.2, Assessment Process and Consultation, Urbis states:

'The applicant has modified the scale of the facility over various assessments in response to stakeholder and community concerns.'

With regards to any reduced visual impact, Urbaine undertook a comparative assessment of the reduced impact, as a result of the reduced Stage 1 design. The overall change to the visual impact of the proposed facility was relatively insignificant when viewed from the residential areas, since the views are observed in elevation and not plan. Although the scale of reduction appears relevant on the overall site plan, the visual impact remains almost the same. Urbaine's previous photomontages, illustrate the significant visual impact of the proposed facility.

**5.** In Section 4.5.2 Urbis states:

'The applicant has gone above and beyond the standard exhibition requirements in consulting and engaging with the community. For the above reasons, it is submitted that a genuine and adequate consultation process has been entered into between the applicant and the community.'

In terms of clearly demonstrating the visual impact to the residents in close proximity to the proposed development, this statement can be questioned. As can be seen in Figure 1, the viewpoints selected by the proponent do not give an objective starting point for the assessment of visual impact and may be potentially misleading.



**figure 1: site plan with locations of viewpoints selected by developer of new proposal**

The viewpoints that have been selected to the West of the subject site appear to have been deliberately chosen to minimise the impact of the new development. The Eastern boundary of the Erskine Park residential area is screened by mature trees bounding the edge of the public land. This screens the development, but the greater visual impact is not observed at these locations. The viewpoints to the North of the site have again been chosen to optimise the observed lack of visual impact, behind existing trees and elevated topography.

It is Urbaine's view that the applicant should be required to undertake an independent visual assessment report, highlighting those areas where the impact is greatest, whilst also giving an overall summary of view impact over the whole area surrounding the site.

The qualitative value of the material produced by the proponent, related to the visual impacts, does not support the statement that the applicant has gone 'above and beyond the standard exhibition requirements'. Further, that material does not provide a base of information to allow the community to respond to the proposal, nor the DPE/IPC to properly assess the proposal's visual impact.

**6.** In Section 5.5 Urbis states:

'The applicant has gone above and beyond the standard exhibition requirements in consulting and engaging with the community.'

Again, as above, the information submitted relating to the visual impact of the proposed development does not support this statement. This has resulted in a somewhat incomplete base of information against which the community has been asked to respond.

Urbaine Pty Ltd acts objectively for all clients and gives the assessment above, based on over 20 years of public and professional engagement in the area of visual impact studies.