

# David Koch

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Treatment of Ararat residents stinks**

Calls were made in State Parliament this week for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings, to heed the plight of residents affected by the offensive odours emanating from the decontamination works at Ararat's old gasworks site in Grano Street.

David Koch, Member for Western Victoria, told Parliament that over 30 neighbourhood households, including numerous elderly residents and up to 40 children, have put up with these remedial works on and off for nearly three years and now they are again having to live with an all-pervasive and offensive smell that is affecting their health and quality of life.

"As a consequence the contractor EESI Contracting has admitted failure to control offensive odours by offering some families temporary accommodation, but these families should not have had to put up with offensive smells that intrude on their everyday lives, driving them from their homes.

"Due to a public outcry two years ago, SP AusNet, made a commitment to instigate odour and dust minimisation measures, including air and dust monitoring, and to participate in community consultation throughout the entire process to address local residents' concerns.

"The plan was to ensure bioremediation treatment be conducted in a manner that would not cause offensive odours beyond the site - indeed the performance standard stated that odours offensive to the senses of human beings must not be discharged beyond the boundaries of the premises.

"The process has been approved and managed by the EPA (Environment Protection Authority) through their preferred contractor EESI Contracting and additional safeguards were supposed to minimise foul odours.

"Despite previous warnings, cautions and even fines from the EPA, the contractors' odour controls have failed these families who are telling me the smell is making them feel sick. They are experiencing a relapse of problems including debilitating headaches, breathing difficulties, severe pain in muscles and joints, and dizziness", said David Koch.

The decontamination works are being undertaken at the former gasworks for SP AusNet, a major energy supplier in Victoria, by EESI Contracting and is part of a clean-up program of eight former state government-owned gas sites in regional Victoria to rehabilitate land for local development.

The works involve remediation of soil contaminated with gasworks waste residue and includes soil also trucked in from Castlemaine, Horsham and Stawell for treatment on the Ararat gasworks site.

David Koch said that the treatment, similar to what occurs in a backyard compost bin, is a slow and drawn-out process of mixing soil with organic matter while using cleaning agents and adding nutrients to break down the contaminants and will now not be completed until at least next April.

"What is worrying is that complaints are going unheeded and letters to SP AusNet, the Premier and his ministers remain unanswered.

"The State Government and Minister Jennings must acknowledge the appalling process adopted and seek the removal of all offending soils from this urban area to a non-urban location to complete the soil treatment works", said David Koch.

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