
Thursday, 25 February 2021

PFAS-contaminated material not permitted at McLaren Vale landfill

The Environment Protection Authority will not permit PFAS-contaminated material to be disposed of at a McLaren Vale landfill site.

A year ago Southern Waste ResourceCo (SWR) sought EPA approval to add per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to the list of contaminated wastes it is licensed to receive at the McLaren Vale landfill.

The company was entitled to make the application through its existing Development Approval to accept contaminated wastes. The EPA was legally required to assess the application.

EPA Chief Executive Tony Circelli said after a rigorous assessment process the EPA Board determined not to approve the SWR application to receive, store, treat and dispose of solid waste contaminated with PFAS at its McLaren Vale landfill.

“The Board assessed the application against the criteria in the [PFAS National Environment Management Plan](#), and the [SA guidelines](#).

“It also took into account research commissioned from the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training at Flinders University, as well as a detailed site investigation, an assessment of PFAS containment barrier systems and community submissions.

“In its deliberations the Board noted that PFAS is a persistent and bio-accumulative chemical of concern that is toxic to some organisms, highly transmissible in water, with national agreement that special guidelines should apply to its management.

“While Southern Waste ResourceCo had proposed best practice engineering measures in its application, the Board considered an unacceptable level of risk remained.

“In addition the Board noted that the uncertainties about the nature of PFAS, and intergenerational considerations dictated the need for a precautionary approach,” explained Mr Circelli.

The Board has asked for a further report and plan regarding the broader policy and operational management of PFAS waste in South Australia.