



press clip

Magnesium project on agenda at forum

By MICHELLE SLATER

LATROBE Magnesium is in the process of negotiating with local contractors to start building a \$34 million pilot magnesium smelter on Tramway Road in Hazelwood North.

Latrobe Magnesium chief executive David Paterson outlined plans for the plant at a public forum in Traralgon last week in front of community members and shareholders.

Most of the community concerns surrounded dust and environmental effects, as well as long-term coal ash supplies and local benefits.

Audience members included the Hazelwood North Action Group which formed to object to a used lead acid battery refining plant slated to be built near the magnesium smelter.

Mr Paterson said consultants were carrying out environmental assessments to meet EPA and council approvals which he hoped would be ticked off next month for construction to start in February.

He said the plant would

provide improved local health outcomes by removing coal ash from Yallourn's ash pits.

However, he said there was a small possibility of magnesium oxide dust being created from two places in the plant, but stressed the processing took place within a confined environment.

"There is still the potential for a dust situation, these are the only real risks, but we are using best practice and it can't escape into the atmosphere as it's based inside the plant," Mr Paterson said.

The pilot plant will use Yallourn coal ash to produce 3000 tonnes of magnesium in the first year of operation before scaling up to process 40,000 tonnes a year in a \$300 million project. The company has a 10-year coal ash supply agreement with Yallourn and enough supply for another 10 years post-power station closure.

Mr Paterson also did not rule out the possibility of taking ash from Hazelwood if the opportunity arose, or from procuring it from an undisclosed source.

Hazelwood North Action Group member Peter Leviston said he was reserving his judgement over the plant until he could view environmental assessments.

"It's all happening very quickly based in what they said tonight, but I think the impacts will be nowhere as severe as what a lead smelter would be," Mr Leviston said.

Latrobe Magnesium had also outlined its plans to Gippsland Climate Change Network earlier that day.

GCCN community power hub project officer Chris Barfoot said the magnesium plant had "merit" but he also said he wanted to see environmental assessments.

"At the moment we are saying this is a scientifically sound proposal with little environmental risk as the materials being produced are non-toxic," Mr Barfoot said.

"It would offer a major solution to fly ash in the Valley, as fly ash is a dangerous material and if we can turn it into something useful it would be so much better."