

Huge changes afoot as Midfield Meats makes it move



The Midfield Meat rendering plant at Levy's Point will be shut down and its operations moved to Scott St, Merrivale, under plans officially released today. Image: B&R Enclosures.

By Carol Altmann

Midfield Meats is again shaking the earth around Merrivale and beyond with plans – [officially released today](#) (29/8/18) – to shut its rendering plant at Levy's Point and build a new, \$18 million plant next to its abattoir in Scott St.

This is a momentous move, with implications all round.

On the upside, if the relocation is approved by the EPA and Warrnambool City Council, it will free up the Levy's Point land for the first time in 53 years and shut down what is one of the greatest assaults to the senses ever encountered by cyclists innocently peddling along the rail trail.

The place stinks and when the big gate is open, it is a horror show.

It was only three years ago that Midfield fought and won a long battle to remain at Levy's Point, but the conditions

around that approval – it seems – will cost more in the long run than moving to a new, purpose-built, super-duper plant at 24 Scott St.

Except...

24 Scott St is near houses – the residential zone is just 250m away.

And 24 Scott St is near a primary school – just 400m away.

These are the two things that Merrivaleans, and others, pointed out when Midfield decided in 2014 that it wanted to build a powdered milk factory in Scott St.

After a huge battle, that project was also approved, but has not yet been built.

Merrivaleans must be exhausted from fight after fight, but it is not only those who live there who need to get their heads around this plan, it is all of us, because it signals a major and permanent change to a part of Warrnambool that is a lot closer to town than Levy's.

You can read the [whole 27-page plan here](#) but here's a quick summary from the EPA:

- two processing lines, processing up to 400 tonnes a day;*
- operating hours will be between 7pm-12am weekdays and 1–5pm on Saturdays, but it will have the capacity to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week*
- a new, purpose built bio-filter;*
- processing carried out in an enclosed building;*
- wastewater from the plant and abattoir will be combined and pretreated at the recently upgraded onsite wastewater treatment facility before discharging to the sewer;*

- *improved energy efficiency, less transport movements and water consumption and eliminate amenity impacts when compared with the existing facility;*
- *key environmental issues are odour emission control and Q-fever risk management;*
- *other issues are stormwater management and noise controls.*

Nobody can argue against building a better plant, but just like the milk powder factory before it, the concern is not only with what is being built, *but where it is being built.*

The best rendering plant in the world is *still* a rendering plant, and I am not sure if that is what we want a stone's throw from houses, a school and less than 2km from the Warrnambool Base Hospital.

While Scott St is an industrial zone, Warrnambool's growth has caught up with it. What was once on the edge of town is now within it.

There is no doubt Midfield is an important player in Warrnambool but it has changed too: it now operates on a global scale and, in 2017, was ranked number 769 out of the top 2000 companies in Australia.

According to IbisWorld, Midfield Meat International generated a total revenue of \$510,270,000 in 2017. That's not all profit, of course, but not a bad turnover for just one year.

Given the huge success of Midfield, perhaps it is time to ask why it can't invest in moving its entire operations right out of town, away from wetlands and houses and schools and our ever-expanding suburbs.

Surely this would provide a solution that works not just for the next 10 or 20 years, but for the next 100, and both Midfield – and Merrivale – could rest easier.

A public information session on the plan will be held from 4pm-6pm, 18 September, Archie Graham Centre, Timor St, Warrnambool.

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