

\$35 waste tax to keep old TVs out of landfill

Ben Cubby
Environment Reporter

AUSTRALIANS face a new tax on electronic goods such as televisions and computers next year – in return for guarantees the electronic waste will not be dumped in landfill or shipped overseas.

The Federal Government is also considering a national scheme for refunds on bottles and cans and will hold public consultations.

But the national plan to ban plastic bags, which the Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, had backed unequivocally in the past, appears to have been dropped.

A meeting of environment ministers in Hobart yesterday agreed a national "e-waste" recycling scheme would start after November.

The developments were welcomed by many environment groups but the move towards refunds for bottles and cans can be seen as a rebuke to the grocery and drinks industry, which says kerbside recycling schemes would be destroyed by the extra costs a deposit scheme could impose on them.

Mr Garrett described the coming e-waste scheme as a breakthrough, although details of the industry-sponsored plan are yet to be finalised.

The Herald understands that Government surveys show strong public support for paying a levy of up to \$35 on new televisions if it is accompanied by a guarantee they will be recycled.

The proceeds would pay for collection of old televisions and

their non-profit recycling, Laurie Nolan, the director of the industry body, Product Stewardship Australia, said.

A slightly different scheme proposed for old computers would still mean a price rise of about \$10 for a laptop computer, the Australian Information Industry Association said.

The bottle and can refund is unlikely to be introduced soon but green groups saw yesterday's decision as paving the way for a national cash-for-cans scheme that would boost recycling rates.

"Public opinion is strongly in favour of a national refund scheme," Clean Up Australia's chairman, Ian Kietman, said. "(Our) research has found that 88 per cent of Australians support the introduction of a 10-cent refund on drink cans and bottles."

The environment ministers also opted for a scheme to investigate the merits of recycling fluorescent lamps. Millions of these go into landfill sites around Australia each year, each holding enough mercury to poison a small town's water supply.

This practice will continue for at least another six months as the Government completes a feasibility study. This may lead to a voluntary regulation program but mandatory schemes are already in place in many other developed countries.

"I would like to know what the old environmentalist version of Peter Garrett would make of these decisions today," said Jon Dee, the founder of environment group Do Something! "I don't think he'd be very impressed."



"This is my people's Dreaming" ... Uncle Worimi, with his grandson Garuahgal, 2, in the park where he was attacked. Photo: Peter Rae

Racism and violence emerge in fight over bypass

The traditional owner of land on the mid-North Coast is taking on opponents, writes **Damien Murphy**.

THE pub had been closed for a few hours when out of the darkness it appeared on the lower slopes of the majestic mountain that guards Bulahdelah – yelling. The old Aborigine at his bush camp on Mount Alum left his four young University of Sydney student friends by the campfire and walked towards his car to confront the tormentors.

His father first brought him to the area long ago, showing him the boring, telling of how young men, after circumcisions, were cleansed in the Healing Stream that trickled down the mountain, and teaching about

the Dreamtime meaning of the towering gums, the Guardian Tree, the Birthing Tree and the Burial Tree.

That was in 1956. On March 28 last year, Uncle Worimi Dares, aged 55, flicked on the headlights of his car just after midnight to illuminate seven young men, some carrying cans of Jim Beam, as they strode through gum trees around his camp that he had daubed with land rights flags. One of them king hit him. He fell, unconscious.

The others attacked the male students, smashing one in the face and slinging another to the ground. Their mates shouted abuse at the students' girlfriends. "Now he's brought Asians up here," one called.

Two local police arrived and eventually sent the attackers away. Fearing for their safety, the campers abandoned the mountain and sought sanctuary in the town. Unknown to them,

much of the violence had been videoed by locals sympathetic to Uncle Worimi's lone stand against the Roads and Traffic Authority's plan to divert the Pacific Highway around the town on the mid-North Coast. A twin-lane road east of the town would cut across Mount Alum, which has angered some who want the diversion moved to the west of Bulahdelah.

'Imagine how people would feel if a road went through St Peter's in Rome.' UNCLE WORMI

As massive highway constructions knock on Bulahdelah's southern limits, and Uncle Worimi, a wood carver with 54 grandchildren, has taken up residence in his bush camp, telling tourists and picnickers about the mountain's significance to Aboriginal culture, some opponents have been subjected

to rock attacks on their homes. "This here is my people's Dreaming," he told the Herald. "I have the authority to speak for my people. I am the traditional owner. Putting a road through ... imagine how people would feel if a road went through St Peter's in Rome or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem."

Uncle Worimi has no support from the Karuah Local Aboriginal

Land Council, which negotiates with the Government on behalf of local Aborigines. The land council stood to receive financial compensation for surrendering Bulahdelah to the RTA. His chief executive, David Feeney, refused to comment on Uncle Worimi's stand but it appeared to have galvanised

dissatisfaction among some Aborigines who believe land councils have become more interested in obtaining money for projects than representing locals. Aboriginal activists have started to coalesce behind Uncle Worimi. At his camp this week were men and elders from northern NSW and Uluru.

On Wednesday the Aboriginal lawyer AI Oshlack will take his case to the Land and Environment Court and argue that the land council had not fulfilled its legal obligations before negotiating with the RTA. The Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett, had already rejected an application for temporary protection of Mount Alum. Mr Oshlack said he would lodge a Federal Court application for permanent protection.

Meanwhile, Uncle Worimi said if the bulldozers came he would climb to the top of the Guardian Tree. "It's a good place to die."

Schools 'stripped of autonomy'

Anna Patty
Education Editor

INDEPENDENT schools are being stripped of their autonomy in school reporting and how they select and reward teachers, according to the headmistress of a leading girls' school.

Writing in the school's news publication, Jenny Allum, the head of SCEGGS Darlinghurst, said: "The ability of schools to be truly independent has been seriously eroded."

She wrote: "As successive governments, both state and federal, have sought to implement their particular ideologies, more and more obligations, requirements and restrictions have been imposed on independent schools."

"Some of these requirements have been more inconsequential – such as the requirement to have a flagpole and sing the national anthem a certain number of times per term.

"Others have greater impact – the requirement to report student achievement to parents in a particular way, or to report to the school community on the achievements of the school in a specified manner.

"The Commonwealth Government has strong views about many aspects of education traditionally left to an independent school to decide for itself."

Ms Allum told the Herald the Federal Government should not impose a "one-size-fits-all" approach to teacher salary scales. SCEGGS Darlinghurst is among schools that make their own wage agreements with staff.

Unlike many others, it has not adopted a three-band scale for teachers negotiated by the Association of Independent Schools NSW and the Independent Education Union.

Ms Allum has also challenged the state government requirement for every teacher to have a diploma of education. She would have no hesitation in hiring academics of the calibre of Julius Sumner Miller who did not have standard qualifications.

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