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# Turning waste into power

## \$160m plan to create jobs and energy

By JASON GORDON

THE covers are set to come off plans for a \$160 million rubbish recycling facility at Kurri Kurri that will not only reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, but will power itself and possibly its neighbours.

Proposed by Omega Energy for a five-hectare site in the Hunter Industrial Ecology Park in Mitchell Avenue, the centre will use new technology to turn household waste into syngas, then electricity.

Its backers also say the "Resource and Energy Recovery" centre will create 70 jobs for the region once completed and would have the capacity to take more than 200,000 tonnes of rubbish away from landfill every year.

The treatment process is complex, but it essentially uses high-temperature "thermal plasma" to convert waste inside a contained reactor such as those used in the steel industry.

It heats the rubbish to temperatures of about 1100 degrees, dis-



PROJECT: An artist's impression of the Resource and Energy Recovery Centre at Kurri Kurri.

integrating it within the closed chamber and containing any emissions. The only things left are molten metals, which can be sold and reused; vitreous slag, which can be used in construction products such as road base; and syngas, which can be converted into electricity.

The electricity will be used to power the centre itself with surplus energy pumped into the grid or sold to neighbouring industry, but the levels of power generated would not be high enough for it to qualify as an energy retailer.

Omega business development manager Shannon Sullivan said

the process used "world-best technology" that will "set new benchmarks" for waste treatment and the way communities, councils and industry recycle waste.

It would also do it more cheaply than was possible now, he said, because the waste delivered there wouldn't attract the controversial state waste levy, which would top \$120 a tonne throughout the Hunter next year.

"What we will bring to the park is the ability to process the waste left over from other recycling processes, enabling 100 per cent recovery of resources and greater diversion from landfill," he said.

Omega general manager Jacob Whiting said the "waste-to-energy" centre would be among the first of its type in the state, and the company was attracted to the Kurri site because of its access to the new freeway extension and the ecology park, which will eventually house complementary businesses.

While the company will formally announce the project on Thursday, it is expecting to get environmental requirement guidelines from the state government next week.

Mr Whiting said the company hopes to have construction under way in 2017 and the centre operational in 2018.

## Council settles on weekly collection of bin for food waste

By DAMON CRONSHAW

Alternatively, the council would