

**Submission  
No 1**

## **INQUIRY INTO 'ENERGY FROM WASTE' TECHNOLOGY**

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

#### **‘Energy from waste’ technology**

#### **Submission**

Lesley Watson

I am strongly against the proposed waste to energy facility at Eastern Creek and waste to energy technology as a means of addressing our current and future waste disposal issues. I have attempted to address each term of reference with the research findings which I have accumulated over a period of five to six months. This being the amount of time I have been aware of the proposal in my local area.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

That Portfolio Committee No. 6 inquire into and report on matters relating to the waste disposal industry in New South Wales, with particular reference to ‘energy from waste’ technology, and in particular:

- a) the current provision of waste disposal and recycling, the impact of waste levies and the capacity (considering issues of location, scale, technology and environmental health) to address the ongoing disposal needs for commercial, industrial, household and hazardous waste

## Response

"Important new data has been published strengthening the evidence that fine particulate pollution plays an important role in both cardiovascular and cerebrovascular mortality ( ...) and demonstrating that the danger is greater than previously realised. More data has also been released on the dangers to health of ultrafine particulates and about the risks of other pollutants released from incinerators (...). With each publication the hazards of incineration are becoming more obvious and more difficult to ignore." [http://www.bsem.org.uk/uploads/IncineratorReport\\_v3.pdf](http://www.bsem.org.uk/uploads/IncineratorReport_v3.pdf)

Frightening public health statistics that can only rise through the addition of further pollution from the proposed waste to energy facility. 'Blacktown South-West has the highest standardised mortality rates in western Sydney for cancer (126), cardiovascular diseases (164), ischaemic heart disease (174) and cerebrovascular disease (159), with the national average being of course 100.2' <https://www.google.com.au/url...>

"Air quality is an issue of equity. Everyone deserves to have clean air. Cities are the most complicated machines humans have built. This complexity means we need to understand many different facets of the urban environment, but it also means we need to act quickly. The air quality of our cities in 2050 depends on the decisions we make today." <http://media.uow.edu.au/releases/UOW197918.html>

"Another academic study by Janet Curie et al (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 18700, January 2013, [www.nber.org/papers/w18700](http://www.nber.org/papers/w18700)) measured the housing market and health impacts of 1,600 openings and closings of industrial plants that emit toxic pollutants: 'We find that housing values within one mile decrease by 1.5 percent when plants open, and increase by 1.5 percent when plants close. This implies an aggregate loss in housing values per plant of about \$1.5 million. While the housing value impacts are concentrated within 1/2 mile, we find statistically significant infant health impacts up to one mile away.'"

Are you aware that this proposed Incinerator will be, a stones throw away from Prospect Reservoir, 'Sydney's largest reservoir and stores water conveyed from Warragamba Dam, the Upper Nepean Dams (Cataract, Cordeaux, Avon and Nepean) and if necessary, from the Shoalhaven

Scheme, for supplying the larger component of the water distribution system of the Sydney metropolis.' ?

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/.../ViewHeritageItemDetails>. The potential for contamination to 'the largest component of the water distribution system of the Sydney metropolis', is surely something worth investigating?

<https://www.theguardian.com/.../how-air-pollution-affects-you...>

Ok lets talk about emissions. Is there an acceptable level of emissions? A paper published in America in 2011 discussing 'burning garbage to Produce Electricity', touches on the reduced emission of nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, dioxins and mercury from such facilities. In a paper focusing on alternative energies published in 2008 they don't hold back in discussing the negative health impacts of waste incineration systems, saying, 'such systems are expensive and does not eliminate or adequately control the toxic emissions from chemically complex MSW. Even new incinerators release toxic metals, dioxins, and acid gases. Far from eliminating the need for a landfill, waste incinerator systems produce toxic ash and other residues.' How do we absorb such pollutants? Through our water ways, the air we breath and the local produce we consume. I must give credit where credit is due, I am sure that this new proposed facility will be accessing the most up to date filtration systems but any noxious emission, no matter how reduced, is still a concern for the health of our community.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/.../does-burning-garbage-t.../>

<http://www.alternative-energy-news.info/negative-impacts-w.../>

b) the role of 'energy from waste' technology in addressing waste disposal needs and the resulting impact on the future of the recycling industry

**Greenpeace International** "Despite what industry and governments would like people to believe, incineration is not a solution to the world's waste problems, but part of the problem."

<http://www.greenpeace.org/.../en/campaigns/detox/incineration/>

"MYTH 1: Waste incineration is a source of renewable energy. FACT: (..) Burning these materials in order to generate electricity creates a demand

for “waste” and discourages much-needed efforts to conserve resources, reduce packaging and waste and encourage recycling and composting. More than 90% of materials currently disposed of in incinerators and landfills can be reused, recycled and composted. Providing subsidies or incentives for incineration encourages local governments to destroy these materials, rather than investing in environmentally sound and energy conserving practices such as recycling and composting."

<http://www.energyjustice.net/files/incineration/myths.pdf>

c) current regulatory standards, guidelines and policy statements overlooking ‘energy from waste’ technology, including reference to regulations covering:

i. the European Union

"The incinerator industry has nowhere left to hide. Europe has stated clearly that incineration is not the future path .." "countries with low or no incineration implement the moves towards modern circular systems' focusing on improving separate collection, increasing recycling capacity, clean production systems and repair and giving more consideration to those processes, such as anaerobic digestion of biodegradable waste .."  
<http://chasecorkharbour.com/death-knell-for-incinerator-industry-as-commission-recommends-moratorium-on-new-facilities/>

ii. United States of America

The link between social justice and the environment. Industry and the resulting pollution being placed in area of low to medium wealth. Being more specific still a great big ugly incinerator being placed in Western Sydney. This video is based on an American model but the argument still stands.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dREtXUij6\\_c&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dREtXUij6_c&feature=youtu.be)

iii. international best practice

Australia's current 'Waste Emission Regulations' fall way short of European standards. The proposed worlds largest incinerator may (in their updated proposal) meet our current regulations BUT the possible implications for the health of the families surrounding the area are unacceptable. Wait until Australia comes into line with European standards before allowing this proposed incinerator or better still lets just say NO to this archaic combustion method of generating energy.

Interesting, it appears that Heathrow Airport, in its attempt to expand, has been in negotiations with Colnbrook incinerator to be moved. Could the same issue occur here with our proposed Badgerys Creek airport being so close to the proposed Eastern Creek Incinerator? It came as no great surprise that when Heathrow originally proposed the Incinerator be moved that the local community and neighbouring suburbs were all for it. <http://www.colnbrook.info/colnbrook-incinerator-to-stay-op.../>

d) additional factors which need to be taken into account within regulatory and other processes for approval and operation of 'energy from waste' plants

Keep in mind this article was published in 2008 but most of the findings have remained consistent with current publications (It does make for quite a harrowing read). "The Precautionary Principle" "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically."

<http://www.bsem.org.uk/.../the-health-effects-of-waste-in.../36/>

Digging a little deeper today. I looked into the safest ways to dispose of industrial waste. It is hard to find detailed descriptions of how to do this in an environmentally friendly way but I did find a company in St Mary's, no less, that already provides this service called Solveco. Questions arise, why are we not looking to the facilities we already have? Is our community responsible for providing an incinerator when it appears we are already actively contributing to the removal and disposal of industrial waste?

<http://www.solveco.com.au> .

e) the responsibility given to state and local government authorities in the environmental monitoring of 'energy from waste' facilities

"There are still significant information shortfalls in the EIS, including the source of the waste and the inability of the applicant to guarantee procedures and processes that satisfactorily demonstrate how all industrial waste will be appropriately sorted. They are still to guarantee that their predictions of low emissions are valid and achievable. The incinerator proposal fails to comply with the area's zoning requirements and is therefore prohibited. It will have a significant impact on critically

endangered ecological communities. Furthermore the location and design of the Energy from Waste plant fails to encourage a high standard of development". Stephen Bali Mayor of Blacktown City'

Lets talk about Dioxins, we have already established that part of the combustion process can be the release of Dioxins. In a paper revised in July 2005, by the Australian Government's Environmental Department called, 'Human Health Risk of Dioxins in Australia', they do not hesitate to say that Dioxins cause cancer. "Dioxins are a group of fat-soluble chemicals which are highly persistent in the environment and which can accumulate in the body fat of animals. If exposure to dioxins is sufficiently extensive, they can cause a range of toxic effects in animals and humans, including skin lesions, reproductive disorders and cancer." Further to this they identify that, "The generation of dioxins results predominantly from combustion processes and atmospheric transport represents the primary route for transport of dioxins into the environment. A review of sources of dioxins in Australia (Pacific Air and Environment Pty Ltd, 2002b) identified a range of possible sources including bushfires and prescribed burning, residential wood combustion and industrial processes. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that our proposed 'worlds biggest', incinerator may produce cancer producing dioxides and despite filtration systems even a very small amount released into the atmosphere may have significant health ramifications for our community.

[www.environment.gov.au/.../e66156a9-a7ac-.../files/report-12.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/.../e66156a9-a7ac-.../files/report-12.pdf)

Lets talk about waste disposal of the industrial kind from the most environmentally friendly, sustainable perspective. Lets talk about prevention. Our country has, 'ISO 14000 (..) a family of standards related to environmental management that exists to help organizations (a) minimize how their operations (processes, etc.) negatively affect the environment (i.e., cause adverse changes to air, water, or land); (b) comply with applicable laws, regulations, and other environmentally oriented requirements, and (c) continually improve in the above. This is wonderful BUT in all my reading there has never been the word, 'compulsory'. Correct me if I am wrong, and I oh so dearly hope I am, but this is a choice for industry in Australia. There are companies who encourage you to go through the process of reaching compliancy by using such phrases as, 'this will help build your business' but nowhere does it say that this is a mandatory act under state/federal legislation. Why don't we make this standard compulsory?

f) opportunities to incorporate future advances in

## technology into any operating 'energy from waste' facility

This is what I am talking about when I question why manufacturers are 'allowed' to create products made out of materials that can not be reused, recycled or up cycled. Instead we look towards archaic methods of disposal of materials that are too dangerous even to put in our landfill. Combustion is not the answer it just creates more noxious pollution. The answer is to demand that new products are made of environmentally friendly materials. Well done Blackmores for leading the way.

<https://www.facebook.com/planetark/photos/a.375983422262.157843.69731837262/10154073641642263/?type=3&theater>

Did you know that there is a waste hierarchy? At the bottom is the 'least favoured option', this being energy recovery and disposal. At the top is the 'most favoured option' which is prevention. I put to you that our proposed 'worlds largest' incinerator falls under our least favoured option of energy recovery. Let's shift out thinking to cleaner more sustainable waste prevention.

**g) the risks of future monopolisation in markets for waste disposal and the potential to enable a 'circular economy' model for the waste disposal industry, and**

What do you get when you transform trash into jobs? You get a truly innovative business that is saving the planet whilst giving back to the community. This LA-based e-recycling plant is a big believer in second chances - for both products and people.

<http://mashable.com/2017/01/24/e-waste-recycling-company/#IIZPJNTBnaq0>

Dr Dominic Hogg is chair of Eunomia Research & Consulting, "Given that we should be trying to reduce our waste and recycle more of what we do create, then we should expect a diminishing amount of residual waste available for incineration or landfill. The solution is not to keep building more and more incineration plants. On the contrary, we need to commit to a strategy based on wasting less and recycling more. The same, of course, applies to Sweden."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/.../sweden-recycling-rates-revol...>

I have been doing a little bit of research globally to see if there have been



findings on cleaner ways to dispose of industrial/other waste. Clearly this is a waste product that can not be recycled or broken down to create a cleaner product. Yes we don't want it buried but I think we need to shift our thinking. Why is it our responsibility? Current research is showing that the solution is to return the responsibility back to the producers of this toxic waste. We need to ask questions like, why you as the producers are not looking at cleaner ways of production so as not to create this toxic waste?  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/.../fs-national-waste-policy.pdf>

## h) any other related matter.

A community based group in Britain who have been protesting against a proposed incinerator in their community have offered encouraging words and support! How amazing is that! [Carlisle Residents Against Incinerator - CRAIN](#)

“Hi Lesley. Wow. Amazing to hear from Australia and thank you for your support. Very sad to hear that your community too is having to fight a company with I am sure sadly just profit motives rather than people motives, just like we are having to do. Communities across the world I think are going through this struggle in different ways with different companies looking to exploit various resources. ( ..) Although our councillors have given it planning consent we hold onto hope in the knowledge that some plants have achieved that but have still not been built, with quite a few companies in the Energy from Waste business going bankrupt. We will continue to challenge it at every stage as this plant is planned for absolutely the wrong place. We wish you very good luck in your fight against the planned incinerator in Blacktown. Keep us posted. I also wish you a happy festive season. Guessing its slightly warmer over there with you than it is over here at the moment!!! Warm regards Helen [#insolidarity](#)”.

In conclusions I put to you that the development of a waste to energy facility is placing a great deal of time and energy into old technology. The way forward is, as the European Commission has already confirmed earlier this year, returning to the source of the waste, manufacturing products that can be reused, repaired, recycled and/or compostable. Incentives given to industry during the manufacturing stage is the way forward. The potential contaminants produced by waste to energy facilities may have detrimental effects to local families, flora and fauna. Our current emission standards need to be reevaluated to come inline, if not to supersede Europe. Waste to Energy facilities threaten a growing

movement towards more sustainable, long term measures focussed on a cyclic approach to the products we manufacture without any potentially harmful residue.