Submission No 376

INQUIRY INTO 'ENERGY FROM WASTE' TECHNOLOGY

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Submission into Energy from Waste Technology

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This is my response to some of your terms of reference points:

'Inquire into and report on the matters relating to the waste disposal industry in NSW with particular reference to 'energy from waste technology…'

With regard to this opening statement, it concerns me that the waste industry is not tightly regulated and if there are any breaches or problems that they are slapped with small fines. The EPA needs to have more authority or control over the current and future industry and this is vitally important for any future waste technologies.
An example I can give to you, is from our area which has different waste facilities in the Blacktown City Council and Penrith Council areas. From these waste facilities, we have been enduring horrible and varied odours for at least the last six to seven years, maybe more. The EPA tries to find the source and sometimes it is successful, but other times it is unsolved. This is worrying, and we must not allow industry to be self-regulated because that is when problems can be hidden.

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*

Currently we have a cluster of waste treatment facilities as well as landfill tips in our local area which are in the Blacktown and Penrith Council areas. The odours do come from these facilities and the EPA, has been trying to deal with it. However, the best practice seems to be driving around in a car to see where the smell is originating from and where the smell has travelled to and if they are the same smells. This is not best practice or reassuring to us residents. That is why the EPA must have more control as well as resources and in particular world class monitoring systems, so that environmental and human health is not affected.
One form of waste technology in our local area is the UR-3R facility under Global Renewables, which sorts Blacktown Council residential waste into

recyclables and composts organic waste. This facility at Eastern Creek saves 66% (*1) of waste it receives, from going into landfill. This in turn produces energy which is captured. The only down side to this is the odour which happens from time to time. Despite the smell this is a far better way of dealing with our waste. I have been told that if it is managed correctly, there should be no smell.

(*1) http://www.globalrenewables.com.au/our-mission/the-ur-3r-process/

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

I don't agree with incinerating waste to make energy and I don't see it correctly addressing the need for waste disposal. Firstly, this is a dirty form of energy production and contradicts the concerns we have for going away from burning coal. Incineration produces more carbon dioxide than burning coal. Secondly, we need to start looking at the waste hierarchy and aiming higher in order to reduce our waste, recycle and re-use. If we follow what Europe and UK have done over the last few decades, we will fall into the same trap of trying to find waste to burn which can hinder or slow recycling as well as prevent.

c. *current regulatory standards, guidelines and policy statements oversighting 'energy from waste' technology, including reference to regulations covering: i. the European Union ii. United States of America iii. international best practice*

The EU Commission on 26 January 2017 put out a report on 'The Role of Waste to Energy in the Circular Economy'
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/waste-to-energy.pdf?utm_source=Press+Release+ZWE&utm_campaign=33253f82f5-PR_ENVI_vote1_24_2017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a7b3972a6a-33253f82f5-208785809
On page 2 it states: 'Waste-to-energy is a broad term that covers much more than waste incineration. It encompasses various waste treatment processes generating energy (e.g. in the form of electricity/or heat or produce a waste-derived fuel), each of which has different environmental impacts and circular economy potential.'

Page 4 ('The role of waste to energy in a circular economy' by EU commission)
'These processes have different environmental impacts and rank differently in the waste hierarchy. In fact, waste-to-energy processes encompass very different waste treatment operations, ranging from 'disposal' and 'recovery' to 'recycling'. For example, processes such as **anaerobic digestion which result in the production of a biogas and of a digestate are regarded by EU waste legislation9 as a recycling operation.** On the other hand, waste incineration with limited energy recovery is regarded as disposal.'

'It important to stress that the waste hierarchy also broadly reflects the preferred environmental option from a climate perspective: disposal, in landfills or through incineration with little or no energy recovery, is usually the least favourable option for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; conversely, waste prevention, reuse and recycling have the highest potential to reduce GHG emissions.'

It is clear that Energy from Waste incineration is not the way to go in Eastern Creek, or NSW or Australia.
In NSW, and indeed Australia, we are in a fortunate position to make great decisions on how we choose to deal with waste and work towards a circular economy. Right now, we can plan strategies and set targets to minimise waste by reducing packaging and single use items, recycling and reusing. Incineration is the 2nd lowest of the least desirable methods of waste disposal in the waste hierarchy.

Start up industries into making reusable plastics and recyclable plastics are one way of growing the economy. Reducing packaging is essential and innovation in new more environmentally friendly packaging should lead the way in this field. For example, in Germany they sell toothpaste without the packaging, just a seal on the cap.

A Circular economy is one where goods are produced, they are reused, and recycled. All effort is made to reduce unnecessary waste and to make sure that all plastic produced is recyclable.

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‘ it is waste prevention and recycling that deliver the highest contribution in terms of energy savings and reductions in GHGs emissions.’

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‘In the future, more consideration should be given to those processes, such as anaerobic digestion of biodegradable waste, where material recycling is combined with energy recovery. Conversely, the role of waste incineration – currently, the predominant waste-to-energy option - needs to be redefined to ensure that increases in recycling and reuse are not hampered and that overcapacities for residual waste treatment are averted.’

‘When assessing national waste management plans and monitoring progress towards the EU recycling targets, the Commission will continue to provide guidance on ensuring that waste-to-energy capacity planning is consistent with, and supportive of, the waste hierarchy and that it takes into account the potential of new and emerging waste treatment and recycling technologies.’

‘The Commission remains committed to ensuring that EU funding and other public financial support is directed towards waste treatment options that are in line with the waste hierarchy, and that priority is given to waste prevention, reuse, separate collection and recycling.’

I do not support the EfW incinerator at Eastern Creek and it is feed stock is uncertain in type and quantity. Look after our environment and the people first please.