

Submission
No 781

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 28 October 2025

Partially
Confidential

I strongly oppose the proposed "Waste to Energy" incinerators in NSW (namely that proposed for the Woodlawn site in Tarago NSW).

I oppose Waste to Energy facilities on the grounds of their danger to human health, the dangers and risks it places in our water and food supply, the setbacks it will place on Australia's focus on net zero emissions and creating a circular economy in terms of waste and the pressure and strain it will place on a hugely productive and vital source of agriculture in NSW.

As a primary producer in the Goulburn-Mulwaree Area (Lake Bathurst NSW), my family's business will be directly affected by the proposed Waste to Energy facility in Tarago, NSW. My family, as well as a huge number of property owners in the Tarago area (and wider Southern Tablelands of NSW) are primary producers, relying on the production of livestock, grain, hay and fodder to run our agribusinesses and supply the community (both local and wider when considering national and international exports) with food. There is evidence that waste to energy facilities place toxic levels of dioxins and forever chemicals dangerous to the health and wellbeing of humans, wildlife and livestock in the local water humans and animals access. My family and our beef cattle business rely 100% on rain water, creeks and groundwater to bathe, wash and water our family and livestock. It also waters the pasture and grains used in fodder and food production. Fly ash from incineration of waste places harmful chemicals into our water supply. Furthermore, our property in Lake Bathurst NSW forms the start of the Sydney Water Catchment. The proposed Waste to Energy Facility at Woodlawn EcoPrecinct in Tarago will directly place harmful chemicals (dioxins, PFAS, heavy metals, brominated toxins and microplastics) into the Sydney Water Catchment, putting so many more human lives at risk of serious health issues such as cancers and reproductive disorders. Recently, the NSW EPA sent me an email informing me that PFAS has been detected in local ground water, with the concentration increasing closer to the Woodlawn Eco Precinct. I was warned to avoid groundwater and get it checked before ingesting. My children swim in the groundwater on our property and our livestock which we and the wider NSW community eat ingest this water everyday, and have done so long before I was informed by the NSW EPA that it likely has PFAS in it (our property is only 5km from the Woodlawn Eco Precinct). Toxics Free Australia reported in 2024 in its Greenwashing Submission that evidence of "widespread Dioxin contamination in Europe is increasing. Many countries have now been found to have unsafe levels of Dioxin and other contaminants in the surrounding environment of EU Best Practice waste incinerators. This contamination has polluted the food chain..." It has been deemed unsafe to ingest produce such as eggs in locations close to incinerators in Europe. If the incinerator is built in Tarago, our beef cattle business (and the lamb, wool, poultry, honey, eggs, wine, hay and grain producing businesses in the Tarago communities [and communities in the area such as Goulburn, Bungendore, Currawang, Sutton, Canberra etc]) is unviable. We will lose a huge amount of businesses supplying food and primary produce to local and international markets. We as business owners cannot sign the waybill when selling our beef cattle with the confidence of knowing exactly what our livestock have ingested (and hence what will enter the food chain). The presence of toxic chemicals in their meat will make selling it ethically problematic and literally dangerous to public health.

The company proposing the Waste to Energy Facility, Veolia, have regularly breached the guidelines for human health with their current operations at the Woodlawn Eco Precinct landfill site. Many community members in Tarago and surrounds have made formal complaints to the NSW EPA for years about the foul odour emanating from the landfill site on numerous occasions. Veolia have been fined multiple times and promise they are dealing with the odour issue, but it continues to pervade our lives everyday. I don't understand how Veolia can claim that their management of an incinerator will be best practice and up to standard if they cannot manage the odour of a landfill at the current site. The company is already making day-to-day life in Lake Bathurst/Tarago sometimes unliveable with the odours wafting from the landfill site, odours of rotting garbage and decomposing waste. It makes working outside near impossible until the odours die down after hours or even days, and creates irony out of the reason my family moved to the area in the first place: fresh, clean air and spending time outdoors in nature.

In 2017, the EU Commission recommendation to its member states was to not invest in waste incineration, to decommission old incinerators and not invest in new ones (Toxics Free Australia, media statement, "NSW Rolls Out the Red Carpet for Incineration", 23 October 2025). A Waste to Energy Incinerator, burning waste including harmful plastics and releasing toxic chemicals into the atmosphere does not align with Australia's efforts to reach net zero emissions and a focus on creating a circular economy. Surely Australia's best interests in terms of waste management is to deal with waste at the coal face, minimising it instead of incentivising and encouraging (not curbing) waste. Burning waste at the supposed 'end' of its life does nothing to limit waste produced by big business and everyday people alike, but simply takes it away to burn and supposedly disappear, but in fact return it to the environment in the forms of fly ash and harmful plumes in the air. Waste to Energy incineration does not support sustainable waste management. Nor does the transport of waste hundreds of kilometres from its collection point in Sydney to the site in Tarago. The emissions created by the trucks alone running constantly between the Crisps Creek Intermodal Facility and the Woodlawn Eco Precinct, at the final stages of the journey of waste from Sydney, can never be considered a sustainable or carbon clean option for waste management.

We in Tarago and Lake Bathurst do not want to be the testing grounds for waste incineration in Australia. Waste to Energy does not promote a circular waste economy, even when touted as "best practice", which is what we should be looking towards in terms of dealing with the huge amounts of plastics and non-recyclable waste produced. Burning plastics (fossil fuel-based materials) and contaminated recyclable materials does not create clean or renewable energy. There are less harmful and cheaper, organic alternatives which must be explored if we are to look towards a circular economy, and we expect our government to explore before even considering incineration as a means to the end of our waste problem in Australia. Alternatives include aerobic composting, anaerobic digestion and Black Soldier Flies. In the time we have spent opposing the incinerator and Veolia ploughing ahead with the plan and all the submissions for and against waste incineration in between, our money and time could be spent exploring these safer waste removal options. We must explore these first- the risks to my local community's health as well as the health of those drinking from the Sydney Water Catchment and eating the meat, vegetables and grains produced in this agriculturally-based community (down to the grains shipped as fodder all across Australia and beyond) posed by the Tarago and Western Sydney Waste to Energy facilities, with studies continuing to emerge about their lack of safety to human health and in fact their decommission in many European sites, is just too great and too unknown to be installed with confidence and security assured to our and the wider community.