

**Submission
No 819**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

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I am an Ordained Minister in the Anglican Church of Australia and a Professor of Physics at the University of Wollongong.

Wearing either hat, I cannot support the construction and operation of an incinerator at Tarago.

Jesus taught we should “do to others as we would have them do to us”. As applied to the construction and operation of a waste incinerator, those whose waste is proposed to be burned should do it in their own backyard, not in their neighbours’.

If there are no health, pollution, or other risks associated with this proposed project there is no reason not to site it in the heart of Sydney. That it is proposed to be sited elsewhere suggests these possible risks are non-negligible.

Moreover, we are to speak up for those who are voiceless. The people of Tarago do not have much say or influence in this matter. Others should stand up and assist them to avoid unnecessary suffering.

As a physicist, it seems to me to be strange, bordering on bizarre, in a period when the burning of fuel is being wound back, that a project to incinerate all sorts of types of matter, organic and inorganic, natural and synthetic, should be even considered.

The recent strong concerns around micro- and nano-particles, the increased knowledge about microplastics and their spread, and the possibility of radionuclides being atmospherically dispersed, alone should caution against any such project proceeding.

Another factor to seriously take into account is the cost and environmental degradation involved in transporting the waste from its source to the proposed incinerator. Our waste footprint, and any associated carbon footprint, should be being reduced, not being expanded, by dealing with waste where it is produced, not moving it somewhere else.

Australia no longer ships its wastes to countries in Asia to process. The nation has accepted that the issue should be dealt with at the source. It would be hypocritical now for the residents of Sydney to export their waste to their country cousins.

The proposal is a poor “solution” to a “problem” that does not need to exist. Laws to reduce packaging would nip the problem in the bud. We have seen a cognate development in the reduction of the use of plastic bags in supermarkets, and single-use soy containers in South Australia. Streaming of waste is a second practical approach. Already, many places have “red”, “yellow” and “green” bins to stream waste - a boost in efficient handling from the days of a single bin. But much more could be done to separate waste; for example, is as done in Germany.

On these grounds my strong view is that there is no case for a waste incinerator at Tarago.

Rev. Dr. Roger Lewis