

Submission
No 982

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 October 2025

Partially
Confidential

Objection to the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre

The proposal of the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre (ARC) exemplifies the inequality between metropolitan and regional areas through the significant risk it poses to human health. If this proposal is accepted by the NSW Planning Authority, the ARC will threaten drinking water quality and agriculture in an area which relies on rainwater as one of its main sources of potable water for drinking, bathing, preparing food, and growing crops. Furthermore, the proposal to operate such a facility does not align with the NSW Government's commitment to Net Zero Emissions by 2050, and prevents the community from taking steps to live sustainably. Hence, the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre should not be permitted.

The Woodlawn ARC, if approved, will create harmful levels of pollution in the drinking water supply of local communities, which poses a significant risk to human health and will create an economic burden for residents. As many Goulburn-Mulwaree, Yass Valley and Queanbeyan-Palerang residents rely on rainwater as their main source of water for drinking, growing and preparing food, and bathing, it is vital that this water is of an acceptable standard in order to protect their health. In relation to rainwater, the NSW Health Department states that “the water should be free from [...] harmful levels of chemicals,” (NSW Health, 2022). The potential for the Woodlawn ARC to release chemicals and other harmful pollutants into the air threatens access to safe water, in areas which have no access to public water supply, and may be forced to resort to water filtration systems, buying bottled water or importing water from safer sources. All these options are highly expensive and negatively impact the environment through the excess packaging waste they create and the energy used to obtain them, such as fuel emissions from trucking water to properties. They are also all costs that individuals will need to absorb, likely with limited support from government. Therefore, because many residents in this region have no public water facilities, unlike their counterparts in Sydney, where much of the waste the Woodlawn ARC will process originates, they will unjustly suffer the health, economic and environmental effects of this project.

The health risks posed by the Woodlawn ARC are serious and suggest that residents of the surrounding area are expendable, in comparison to those who live in metropolitan areas such as Sydney where similar waste management projects have been rejected. The chemicals released in the process of waste incineration can have significant impacts on health, and have been linked to cancers, infant death and miscarriage, and congenital anomalies. While newer waste incineration technologies may have a reduced impact, studies into their effects are inconclusive and a cautionary response has been recommended until adequate time has passed for any adverse effects to emerge (Tait et al., 2019). Therefore, the Woodlawn ARC proposal cannot be supported, as it poses too great a potential hazard, especially when there are other methods available to process waste. According to the NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1, “Innovation needs to be part of any plan to reach net zero emissions by 2050,” (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2020). Using an incinerator to manage waste is not an innovative technology, and has been used to the detriment of the environment and health for decades. Sydney’s waste should not be transported to the regions, because it allows the problem of safe waste management to move to the back of the minds of Sydneysiders, and to the forefront of poor

regional health outcomes and inequality. The fair and equal consideration of all NSW residents should be of the highest priority for the NSW Government, thus approving the Woodlawn ARC cannot occur as it is in direct opposition to achieving this.

The development of the Woodlawn ARC will limit and discourage sustainable practices at all levels of society; from state government to the individual; and will not contribute to reaching net zero emissions by 2050. An investment in this facility will encourage limited action from individuals or councils to reduce overall landfill inputs, as it poses as a solution to waste management. It may also impede investment in closed loop initiatives such as innovative recycling programs. The ARC justifies its plans to incinerate waste by collecting the energy produced. However, the Net Zero Plan Stage 1 states that “when combined with firming technologies, such as gas, batteries and pumped hydro, renewables are now the cheapest forms of new, reliable electricity generation” (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2020). There is hence no purpose in pursuing such a technology which burns non-renewable resources; the proposed operation of the ARC could be compared to burning fossil fuels to create energy. Given “The NSW Government’s fourth priority is to play a leading role itself, by bringing sustainable goods, services and practices into the market and maximising the environmental value of the assets it oversees,” (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2020) the government cannot support this proposal. Seeing out the lifespan of the existing landfill management facility at Tarago and investing in successful, sustainable technologies such as diversion of organic waste from landfill to make compost and supporting research into recycling will make a far greater positive impact on the environment. These strategies could be used in combination to effectively manage Sydney’s waste safely. The Woodlawn ARC is not an acceptable answer to the issue of waste management in NSW when we have such options available.

The proposal to construct the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre cannot be approved by the NSW Planning Authority. This project poses too significant a threat to the lives of residents in the Goulburn-Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Queanbeyan-Palerang and surrounding regions. Its potential to negatively impact drinking water, and consequently health in the area will perpetuate regional inequality and cause significant health and financial harm to the residents. Allowing the ARC to operate implies that NSW’s rural and regional residents are less important than those who live in metropolitan areas, and that the risks to their health and wellbeing are inconsequential. Furthermore, the approval of such an archaic form of waste management technology will discourage investment in technologies and strategies that will minimise waste and close loops, instead providing a band-aid solution and obstruction to achieving the Net Zero Plan by 2050. The Woodlawn ARC simply cannot be permitted.

References

Department of Planning, Industry and Science, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030 (2020). State of New South Wales 2020. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-08/net-zero-plan-2020-2030-200057.pdf>.

NSW Health. (2022, September 30). *Rainwater Tanks*. NSW Health Department. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/water/Pages/rainwater.aspx>

Tait, P. W., Brew, J., Che, A., Costanzo, A., Danyluk, A., Davis, M., Khalaf, A., McMahon, K., Watson, A., Rowcliff, K., & Bowles, D. (2019). The health impacts of waste incineration: A systematic review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 44*(1), 40–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12939>