

**Submission  
No 992**

## **INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES**

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The proposed Energy Recovery Facilities at Tarago and Parkes raise significant concerns about their environmental performance, particularly when compared to proven “state-of-the-art” facilities internationally. The incineration technology proposed by Veolia operates at approximately 850°C—well below the 1200°C threshold identified in research as necessary for the complete destruction of PFAS chemicals. Incomplete combustion at these lower temperatures results in the release of PFAS and other persistent toxic compounds into the environment, contributing to climate change impacts and public health risks. Monitoring systems for such facilities are also unreliable, often failing to capture emissions during start-up, shutdown, or equipment malfunction—periods known to produce the highest concentrations of dioxins, furans, PFAS, and fine particulate matter. Burning plastics further adds to the problem, generating greenhouse gas emissions comparable to or exceeding those from coal-fired power.

The emission quality and spread from the proposed facilities are further cause for alarm. Veolia has lobbied to relax emission standards under the NSW Energy from Waste Framework, suggesting it cannot consistently meet best-practice environmental standards. International experience reinforces this concern: England’s network of 53 incinerators breached environmental permits 352 times in a single year, while Veolia itself has a documented history of PFAS and leachate contamination breaches (EPA Report, August 2025). Such failures pose direct risks to air quality, soil health, and waterways, including the Crisps Creek and Mulwaree River catchments already under EPA investigation. Overseas examples, such as areas near Paris where backyard eggs are no longer safe to consume, demonstrate the long-term contamination risks to agricultural land and food safety—issues that could irreparably damage the reputation and export potential of regional produce.

Beyond environmental concerns, the health and social implications of waste incineration are deeply troubling. PFAS exposure is linked to cancer, reproductive harm, and cardiorespiratory illness, with vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly most at risk. Even “new technology” incinerators have been associated with increased infant mortality and fertility issues in surrounding communities. Given the history of reassessing what is “safe” in hindsight—as seen with asbestos and PFAS—it is reckless to proceed with a facility that risks irreversible contamination of regional water, soil, and food systems. The project also threatens local property values, community wellbeing, and the integrity of the Parkes Special Activation Precinct. Rather than invest in outdated and hazardous waste-to-energy projects, New South Wales should prioritise genuine zero-waste strategies: waste reduction, stronger recycling systems, FOGO expansion, bans on PFAS, and product design reforms that eliminate waste at the source.