

Submission
No 994

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I write as a concerned resident in one of the proposed WtE incinerator regions (Tarago) to strongly oppose the approval of any waste-to-energy (WtE) incineration facilities in regional NSW. These projects pose unacceptable risks to human health, the environment, water resources, and our local economy, while undermining genuine sustainable waste solutions. WtE incineration is not a 'green' technology—it is expensive, polluting, and incompatible with Australia's waste hierarchy and net-zero goals.

This submission (whilst brief in nature here) draws on recent peer-reviewed studies, epidemiological data, and expert analyses (2020–2025) to demonstrate why these proposals must be rejected outright. I urge the Committee to prioritise zero-waste strategies that protect our communities.

1. Severe Human Health Risks

WtE incinerators release toxic emissions including dioxins, furans, heavy metals (e.g., mercury, lead), particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), and nitrogen oxides, even with modern controls. These pollutants cause:

Increased cancer rates: Proximity to incinerators linked to higher neoplasia (e.g., breast cancer).

Respiratory and cardiovascular diseases: Meta-analysis (2025) shows 8% higher COPD risk and 2% overall respiratory risk near facilities.

Reproductive harms: Elevated birth defects, miscarriages, and infant deaths.

Vulnerable groups hit hardest: Children, pregnant women, and low-income communities face disproportionate exposure.

Real-world data: In Spain/France/Netherlands (2025), dioxin levels near incinerators were 300x baseline in moss samples. No safe exposure level exists for dioxins—they bioaccumulate in food chains.

This is scientific evidence, proven beyond a doubt and simply cannot be ignored.

2. Devastating Environmental Impacts

Air pollution: Emits more GHGs per kWh than coal (1,707 g CO_{2e}/kWh)—worse than any fossil fuel. Undermines recycling, which saves 5x more energy.

Toxic ash (20–30% of input): 1 tonne waste = 200–300kg hazardous ash. Contains dioxins, heavy metals—not inert.

Biodiversity loss: Pollutants contaminate soil, harming agriculture and wildlife.

3. Water Contamination: A Ticking Time Bomb

Incinerator ash leachate is highly toxic, seeping heavy metals, dioxins, and PFAS into groundwater.

Studies confirm: MSWI ash landfills produce leachate with high dioxin/heavy metal mobility; uncontained ash sites show surface/groundwater pollution.

Regional NSW risk: Parkes/Tarago's aquifers are vulnerable—one breach = irreversible contamination for drinking/agricultural water.

Tarago already has contaminated water from the current Veolia operations. How can they be trusted again when they've already failed the community surrounding them?

Long-term: Ash remains hazardous for decades; "stabilised" ash still leaches in rain.

Example: Hospital waste ash leaches dioxins at alarming rates; MSW ash roads showed persistent toxicity over 36 months.

4. Economic and Social Costs to Communities

Prohibitive expense: \$190M–\$1.2B to build—4x solar. Operating costs lock councils into waste importation for 30+ years.

Property devaluation: "Not In My Backyard" justified—health fears crash values.

Job myth: Recycling creates 50x more jobs than incineration.

Locks in waste: Discourages reduction/reuse, perpetuating 3.5M tonnes NSW waste/year.

5. Superior Alternatives: Zero Waste Now

WtE violates the waste hierarchy (reduce > reuse > recycle > recover > dispose). Proven successes in waste hierarchy:

Reduce: NSW can cut waste 50% via policies (e.g., deposit return).

Recycle/Compost: 80% diversion possible; Capannori, Italy: 82% diversion, no incinerator.

Jobs boom: Zero waste = 10–20x employment vs. WtE.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Approve NO WtE incinerators. They are a 30-year mistake—polluting, costly, and obsolete.

The one question that has still remained unanswered - if this was banned in Greater Sydney because it was not safe or suitable, why are regional communities any different? No-one can tell us why we should be burning Sydney's rubbish when it has been banned in Sydney itself. Our clean air, food producing environment and clean water deserves equal protection to that of our city counterparts.

Urgent actions:

Ban WtE in NSW planning.

Fund zero waste: \$1B for infrastructure/training.

Enforce hierarchy: Mandatory 80% diversion by 2030.

Independent health study on existing facilities.

Our communities deserve clean air, safe water, and a thriving future—not toxic legacy. All stats given are publicly available in the appropriate studies and should be included when considering this proposal.

Thank you for protecting regional NSW in the same way Sydney has been protected.