

Submission
No 1010

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 October 2025

Partially
Confidential

The Secretary

NSW Department of Planning and Environment

Subject: Objection to the proposed Energy-from-Waste / Incinerator facility at Woodlawn Eco-Precinct, Tarago (Project: Advanced Energy Recovery Centre)

Dear Secretary,

I write to formally object to the proposed “Advanced Energy Recovery Centre” (or equivalent name) by Veolia Environmental Services (or applicant) at the Woodlawn Eco-Precinct near Tarago in the Southern Tablelands of NSW. I ask that you reject the proposal, or at minimum require significantly strengthened safeguards, based on the following grounds (included links to source information):

1. Impact on air quality, public health & environment

Incineration of waste can emit a range of hazardous pollutants (including dioxins, furans, heavy metals, particulate matter, acidic gases) and there is evidence these pollutants can travel away from the site and deposit on land, water and agricultural produce.

https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/life/environment/2024/04/06/farmers-push-back-against-planned-waste-incinerator?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The Tarago region is rural, includes agricultural land, and produces food (livestock, crops) for wider markets. Any contamination of soil, water or air could have long-term effects on human health, food safety, and farm livelihoods.

https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/life/environment/2024/04/06/farmers-push-back-against-planned-waste-incinerator?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The community already raises concerns about odours, truck traffic and previous environmental non-compliance by the operator at the existing site.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/06/leaking-trucks-and-rotten-egg-gas-veolias-waste-project-plan-has-tarago-furious?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The cumulative burden: rural areas should not be expected to absorb disproportionate risk simply because they are outside metropolitan zones.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-10/regions-to-fight-nsw-waste-incineration-plan/100525358?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2. Threat to agricultural production, property values & rural amenity

The value of agricultural produce may be adversely affected if contamination or perceived contamination occurs, whether real or by association.

https://www.thesouthernwire.com.au/council-stands-firm-on-opposition-to-incinerator-2025-10-23?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Property values and community amenity may decline through increased heavy-vehicle traffic, noise, dust and change in rural character, as well as 'perceived' danger to health and well-being of locals.

https://www.thesouthernwire.com.au/council-stands-firm-on-opposition-to-incinerator-2025-10-23?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The social and mental health cost: uncertainty regarding long-term impacts creates stress for residents and local farmers.

https://www.thesouthernwire.com.au/council-stands-firm-on-opposition-to-incinerator-2025-10-23?utm_source=chatgpt.com

3. Waste & circular economy concerns

The proposal appears to prioritise burning residual waste rather than emphasising reuse, recycling and waste reduction. Incineration may undermine efforts to move to a circular economy.

https://greens.org.au/act/news/media-release/act-greens-oppose-tarago-incinerator?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Given the waste hierarchy (reduce → reuse → recycle → recovery → disposal), reliance on large-scale incineration can lock in high waste flows rather than incentivise reduction.

4. Location & suitability issues

While the NSW Government has designated the “Southern Goulburn Mulwaree Precinct” (which covers the Tarago region) as one of four possible areas for energy-from-waste facilities, this does not automatically make any proposal appropriate.

https://norichmondvalleyincinerator.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NSW-legislation-on-Waste-to-Energy.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The rural location, proximity to farmland, and water capture zones raise special issues. For example, groundwater or surface water contamination risk exists in agricultural areas (our dam, for example, forms part of Sydney water catchment). In addition, EVERY SINGLE HOUSEHOLD in the area relies on rainwater tanks for their main source of household water.

https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/life/environment/2024/04/06/farmers-push-back-against-planned-waste-incinerator?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Transport of large volumes of waste and ash (truck movements) will impact local roads, safety and rural amenity.

5. Assessment, transparency & community rights

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (or similar assessment) has not fully addressed all risks, or how worst-case failures will be managed (e.g., failure of air-pollution controls, ash/ residue disposal).

https://aboutregional.com.au/opponents-alarm-bells-ringing-as-veolia-flags-amendments-to-latest-tarago-waste-incinerator-plan/455533/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The community must have full access to modelling, monitoring data, contingency plans, and long-term monitoring.

Local government (Goulburn Mulwaree Council) has expressed “total opposition” to waste-to-energy in this region unless very strong community benefit and safeguards are provided.

https://www.goulburn.nsw.gov.au/News-Articles/Council-response-to-Waste-to-Energy-regulation?utm_source=chatgpt.com

6. Precautionary principle & irreversible impacts

Some impacts (soil contamination, groundwater impacts, persistent organic pollutants) may be long-term, difficult to reverse, and may only become evident over decades.

Given the uncertainty and magnitude of possible impacts, the precautionary principle demands that, unless the proponent can demonstrate, with guarantee, very high confidence of safety, the project should not proceed.

Requests / Conditions

Should the proposal proceed, I request the following conditions (or further safeguards) be mandated:

Rigorous independent baseline monitoring (air, soil, water, agricultural produce) before, during and after operation.

Transparent, publicly-accessible real-time emissions and monitoring data (air quality, ash residues, transport incidents).

Strict buffer zones between the facility/transport routes and sensitive land uses (homes, farms, schools).

Long-term liability and financial assurance from the proponent for environmental remediation and health monitoring over decades.

Preference for alternative technologies or smaller-scale options focussed on waste reduction, recycling and composting rather than bulk incineration.

Community benefit measures (jobs, infrastructure, local monitoring oversight, funding to local landholders) reflecting the burden borne by the region.

Commitment to close and secure disposal of any ash/residue in a manner consistent with best international practice and preventing contamination of land or water.

Clear contingency plans for accidents, failure of pollution controls, transport leaks/spills, and rapid community notification.

Conclusion

In summary, while I acknowledge the challenges of waste management and the need for infrastructure to deal with residual waste, I believe the proposed facility at Tarago presents significant risks — to the environment, to public health, to agricultural production and to the rural community's livelihood and amenity. Moreover the broader policy of favouring incineration over waste-reduction and recycling is problematic in the context of a circular economy.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge that the proposal be rejected or, at the very least, deferred until the proponent can comprehensively demonstrate safety, community benefit and adherence to best-practice standards, and until clearly less harmful alternatives have been ruled out.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,