

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED ENERGY FROM  
WASTE FACILITIES**

**PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES**

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**At , The Auditorium, Goulburn Workers Club, Goulburn, on Thursday 14 May 2026**

**The Committee met at 4:35.**

**PRESENT**

The Hon. Nichole Overall (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Banasiak  
Dr Amanda Cohn (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones  
The Hon. Peter Primrose  
The Hon. Emily Suvaal

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine



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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the second public forum of the Committee's Inquiry into Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities. I acknowledge the Gundungurra people, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Nichole Overall. I am the Chair of the Committee.

Thank you for joining us and making time to speak to the Committee today. This forum is an opportunity for members of the Goulburn community to share their thoughts on the proposals to build energy-from-waste facilities in New South Wales. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. This is a parliamentary proceeding, and standards of respectful conduct apply at all times. Disruptive behaviour, interruptions, applause or demonstrations are not officially permitted, in the same way that we are always on our best behaviour in Parliament.

The speaking list has been posted at the door, and we ask that speakers come to the microphone in the order listed. To allow things to move as quickly as possible, and bearing in mind that we have many speakers this afternoon, I ask that the person speaking next sit or stand near the microphone. I will call people's names when it is their turn to speak. To ensure the Committee hears from as many community members as possible, speaking time is limited to two minutes. I ask that people be respectful of that time limit and the time of others. We will ring a bell at the one-minute mark and again at the two-minute mark to signal the end of speaking time. That is a hard adjournment. Please state your full name before speaking and whether you are appearing on behalf of an organisation. Please note that each person will only be permitted to speak once.

The Committee will not be answering questions today as the purpose of this forum is to hear from the community about its views on the proposed energy from waste facility. Please note that parliamentary privilege applies to the evidence given. However, I urge speakers to be respectful with any comments they make and to refrain from making any adverse mentions. For people who prefer not to speak today or who have not had the chance to register, we have provided a suggestion box to allow them the opportunity to submit views if they choose to do so. The suggestions will be formally accepted for the Committee's information only and will be kept confidential. On that basis, we will commence proceedings.

**COLIN BOSWORTH**, before the Committee: I am the president and treasurer of a community environmental group named No Incinerator for Western Sydney. I am speaking on their behalf here today. I welcome the opportunity to make our views known in relation to energy-from-waste incineration. The first point I would make is that we are dealing with two proposals, one more advanced than the other. The one at Tarago is obviously far more advanced than the one at Parkes, which has only just commenced the approval process. My comments essentially relate to the Tarago proposal of Veolia.

In any event, neither of the proposed energy-from-waste incinerators for New South Wales has at this point in time been able to demonstrate that they are capable of compliance with the legislative and regulatory requirements applicable to these facilities. Reliance upon international performance of these facilities is problematic and ambivalent at best, with proponents' assertions that the introduction of newer technologies in emissions control will enable safe operation of these incinerators in urban and regional communities. We do not dispute that these facilities are currently operating in these environments internationally; however, the scientific evidence that they are operating safely and that there has been no impact upon the health of these communities or regional produce has yet to become available. The sworn evidence before this inquiry is highly questionable, tainted or mere assertion on the part of the proponents or their consultants. Veolia claim to be world leaders in the application of this technology, yet have not been able to—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Bosworth, your two minutes is up.

**BOB PHILIPSON**, before the Committee: I am from the Goulburn Mulwaree Community Sustainability Hub. The community sustainability hub is about building a sustainable community and economy. We see that our work is placed at significant risk by building an incinerator at Tarago. There is an increasing imperative due to the war with Iran and resultant economic impacts on the price of fuel to grow more fresh food in our LGA. The incinerator, we see, places that plan at risk. One sensible alternative that would generate jobs in Tarago is to set it up as an ecotourism and agritourism destination—in particular, targeting tourists from Canberra—and also as a centre for growing vegetables and fruit.

On startup, the incinerator sends dioxins up the chimney until it gets to operating temperature. They have a history of pollution and they will potentially pollute farmland, get into the river system and therefore into the Warragamba Dam and into our food. Turning such waste into compost generates income and not dioxins for our council. A number of Sydney councils have locked themselves into rubbish collections from companies that build

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and operate incinerators, with predictable results. Building the waste incinerator could be seen as a lack of political will and responsibility for the welfare not just of rural dwellers but of all those reliant on the water from the Warragamba Dam.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Philipson. We love contributions that come in before time.

**DAMIAN POULTER**, before the Committee: I live near Tarago and I'll be representing myself and my family. Incinerators have claimed to be safe—that there is zero reason to exclude building incinerators in more populated areas. The fact that policy and legislation exist implies that there is a risk. Unsafe incinerators in rural areas lowers the impact on the population. Either rescind the legislation and policy or admit the risk—you can't have it both ways. In Tarago, we can predict the outcome based on Veolia's current behaviour—persistent odour, leaking containers, probable groundwater contamination. Even with strict conditions, Veolia's incinerator will lead to more environmental failures.

An incinerator in Woodlawn does not address the waste issue facing Sydney. Burning 380,000 tonnes per annum rather than burying it does not increase Sydney's capacity to dispose of that waste. Veolia states there are no plans to increase waste volumes going to Woodlawn. EPA GIPAA request 1143 shows otherwise. The EPA has also included that into some of their public documents to show an increase of waste going to Woodlawn. Incinerating Sydney's waste in rural areas allows the New South Wales Government to continue to kick this issue down the road. There are no repercussions for generators of waste in Sydney. Veolia's incinerator or existing bioreactor will never be shut down. This would place a major dent on Sydney's waste disposal capacity. Veolia knows this and knows that they can actually get away with minor fines or a slap on the wrist. A waste incinerator in Tarago is forcing repercussions on a rural community because other people want to ignore waste generation.

**MATTHEW FORD**, before the Committee: I work at Tarago one day a week, but I'm not representing that organisation. I notice Dr El Hanandeh mentioned ways of lining landfill safely, which was to do with geotextiles and compressed clay. We also had Xavier Martin mention something like 250 million tonnes of excavations in New South Wales last year. Even if 5 per cent of that was geologically or geographically appropriate for landfill, that is still over 10 million tonnes per annum, potentially. I was also a bit disappointed—sorry, Labor members—that there was no plastic tax in the budget, because that's something that has been talked about for a long time that could help support our recycling. We all see how hard our recycling industries work. It would be nice to see more of that underpinned with good, strong taxation legislation.

I must say, I've been a bit surprised to hear supporters of the incinerator industry downplaying gasification and pyrolysis, because it's not science fiction. It's not something you'd read about in an Isaac Asimov novel, as such. The Japanese have got some really good systems going over there. They gasify the waste first using energy from the gas, and then they can burn that gas at about 1,350 degrees, while at the same time turning the bottom ash into a vitreous slag. My point about that is not so much that we should be doing that at Tarago, but that we can do that in Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Ford. Could the audience please not applaud.

**JAMES INNES**, before the Committee: I am a landholder and farmer from the Tarago area. The Woodlawn site lies approximately nine kilometres, as the crow flies, from my property. I want to make clear that my opposition to the Veolia proposal is not personal in terms of the Veolia company or the workers that rely on that industry. I am someone who is concerned about the impacts on the land. I hope to leave the land in a healthier place than it was found. City waste is often something placed in a red bin on Tuesday night and by Wednesday it is forgotten. In the bush, we do not have that luxury. Out here, the wind carries things, the water carries things and the soil remembers and contains those things. When uncertainty exists about the long-term impact to air, land, water, agriculture, livestock and human health, then the precautionary principle matters. It exists for moments like these because, once contamination occurs, trust in clean country is damaged.

Once farming regions become associated with industrial waste and processing, there is no simple undo button. The bush already carries much of the burden for the nation. We carry the transmission lines, the mines, the freight routes, the quarries and, increasingly, the waste infrastructure. Yet what we produce from the land is food, water stewardship, biodiversity and community. Those things have value. The cost will not be carried by the city; it will be carried in the bush in the soil and the water and the lives of the people who remain here long after the feedstock has stopped rolling. I ask this Committee to carefully think not just about economics and engineering but also about intergenerational responsibility and about what kind of country we are shaping.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Innes. I understand, but there is to be no applause during the proceedings.

**ANTHONY HILL**, before the Committee: I'm a landholder in the Tarago area and I'm here representing myself. In my view, the proposal for this waste incinerator is entirely inconsistent with community and

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environmental standards. Already we're hearing that emissions from the Woodlawn facility are causing pollution that is poisonous to livestock in the Lake George catchment—I quote from a letter of a landholder there in June last year. This proposal goes further down a very damaging road that ignores a whole lot of aspects of directions that the community should be taking towards a circular economy.

What are we asking about waste? What is this waste? Why do we call it waste? Instead of putting it up in smoke and adding to emissions that will potentially add to global warming, why aren't we instead putting the investment behind this proposal towards serious attempts to support people in the city to make use of this resource? I can name a number of areas where that's important, but one of the most important ones is that if this proposal were to go ahead, it would make a very tiny contribution to the energy needs of the community, whereas we should be focusing on renewable energy that can easily take account of that usage. Thank you.

**PAIGE DAVIS**, before the Committee: I want to make it clear that when companies like Veolia bring forward proposals of this magnitude, their long history of noncompliance must be front and centre. This is not about theory or trust in future promises; it is about evidence, and the evidence from Veolia's landfill in Tarago shows repeated failure to meet basic environmental requirements. In July 2024, the New South Wales EPA fined Veolia \$30,000 for preventable failures in leachate management that risked pollution of soil, groundwater and surface water. In February 2025, Veolia was fined again for allowing leachate dams to exceed licensed limits, creating a pollution risk and requiring a formal clean-up notice. In April 2026, the EPA issued a prevention notice after identifying major failures in landfill gas capture and leachate management, causing persistent offsite odours for the Tarago community. The EPA found Veolia's internal monitoring and response systems could not reliably identify, manage or prevent pollution.

The regulator described an "interconnected system failure"—elevated leachate, impaired gas extraction and odour impacts occurring together and persisting over years. Veolia has faced multiple EPA enforcement actions for failures in core environmental controls. These are only the most recent breaches. The enforcement history stretches back decades, showing a longstanding pattern of noncompliance, not isolated incidents. These are not allegations; these are the findings of the New South Wales EPA. This is the same site where Veolia now proposes a waste incinerator—a facility far more complex, more hazardous and far less forgiving than a landfill. A company that cannot consistently operate an existing waste facility within licence conditions cannot credibly be entrusted with a toxic waste incinerator that depends on zero tolerance for failure. When the consequences of failure rise, the tolerance for incompetence falls to zero. If this Government approves Veolia's incinerator in the face of this evidence, it will not be because the risks were unknown, it will be because they were ignored.

**CHRISTOPHER O'MAHONY**, before the Committee: I'm a resident of Goulburn and also currently serve as a councillor on Goulburn Mulwaree Council. I speak in a private capacity but nevertheless representing the views of many unhappy and alarmed constituents of this region who have reached out to me. I'd like to focus on the state of waste-to-energy incineration in other developed countries, who are now demonstrating a much-reduced appetite for incineration. I'll start with the European Union. Since 2015, pressure has been growing from within the scientific community to declare a moratorium on new incinerator sites. This call is based on a growing body of evidence regarding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, bottom ash toxicity, negative impacts on human health and the food chain, and reducing conventional recycling streams. In 2018 European incinerators pumped out an estimated 95 million tonnes of carbon dioxide—about 2 per cent of total emissions. As a result, since 2025, the European Parliament has indeed been urging member nations to minimise incineration.

Over in the UK, research published in 2024 based on five years of data demonstrated that waste energy incineration generates almost the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of electricity as a coal-fired power station. What an own goal for achieving net zero. For this reason, among others, many UK councils are refusing to approve new waste energy submissions. Over in the USA, the Environmental Protection Agency there released an incineration report in 2024, and I quote: "Waste incineration is a key source of toxic agent emissions". According to EPA's estimation, in one year, incinerators in the United States emitted nearly 50,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, 4,600 tons of sulphur dioxide, 3,200 tons of hydrogen chloride, 780 tons of particulates, 15 tons of dioxins, 5.5 tons of lead, 2.3 tons of mercury and 0.2 tons of cadmium. Bring back Erin Brockovich. Right here, not 50 kilometres as the crow flies from Tarago, the ACT has recently extended indefinitely their policy.

**VICKI HAPP**, before the Committee: Madam Chair and Committee members, I'm a Goulburn City resident—a concerned Australian with open eyes and a thoughtful heart. The proposal is one of many—the incinerator is just one of many options—for dealing with waste and, in my view, a short-term solution to a long-term issue. We should be treating the root cause of our waste rather than fixing the problem later: consumerism, capitalism, careless greed and little regard for the consequences or the future of the human race. Perhaps we should be instead educating, raising community awareness—re-use, recycle and repair rather than discarding and forgetting our broken, unused stuff and waste.

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**KENNETH HALLIDAY**, before the Committee: I am a resident of Goulburn and representing Waste Circology. I refer you to submissions Nos 123 and 264. Our submissions focus on the alternative solutions to reduce and manage waste produced by Greater Sydney. The focus is on what to do with the waste—not generate electricity. The burn, bash and bury of waste is still in practice, despite advances in emission management for antiquated systems. Applying Waste Circology's patented, proven technology means that any material, including waste, can be processed where it is collected and not transported to other locations. Our aim is to produce biochar that can be re-used in agriculture, industry and infrastructure. The process results in high-quality biochar, free from toxic chemicals, including PFAS, and without toxic emissions.

The NSW EPA, primary industry and Sydney Water are well aware of our advanced, safe technology. All batches through the OCS process are analysed by NATA labs, and in one of the submissions to this Committee these results have been made available. We at Waste Circology are of the view that the New South Wales Government does not encourage—or indeed undermines—the efforts of proven carbon sequestration innovative technology in favour of old technologies as a quick fix by declaring the Veolia proposal a project of State significance. I put it to the Government through this Committee that you cannot dislike or reject the technology unless you have an interest elsewhere. Waste Circology again invites the Committee to view the OCS process in operation at South Strathfield, a suburb of Sydney.

**IAN ANDERSON**, before the Committee: Thank you for coming. I'm a farmer, a retiree, a father of four and a grandfather of nine. I represent Citizens Climate Lobby, Goulburn region. I'm also a member of the cross-party working group against the proposed waste incinerator in Goulburn and waste to energy in Australia in general. We have a huge waste problem. Why are we burning waste rather than reducing waste? Burning waste is the lazy solution. Burning waste does not encourage waste reduction; it will only increase waste as there is no incentive to reduce waste. Australia is a huge waste generator. We generate some 27 million tonnes per annum and growing. Sydney generates approximately five million tonnes of waste per annum. On average, that is one tonne of waste per annum for every man, woman and child in the nation.

The proposal for Goulburn is to burn some 380,000 tonnes of Sydney's waste, night and day, every day for 30 years. The proposal suggests 99.99 per cent of dioxins, PFAS and heavy metals—forever chemicals—will be destroyed or captured in the system. That leaves 0.01 per cent of the proposed tonnage not captured, which equates to a minimum of 38 tonnes of forever chemicals escaping into the atmosphere every year—more than 10 kilos a day every day for 30 years. That's a huge 1,140 tonnes of toxic waste released into our atmosphere over the 30-year life cycle. These toxic chemicals threaten everyone's living. Where are the long-term waste reduction plans? Burning waste is a toxic and lazy solution with extreme risks. We don't want Sydney's waste burnt here.

**KEITH SMITH**, before the Committee: I'm a councillor at the local council. I'm also the council rep at Woodlawn. I speak to the people of Tarago and surrounding areas. Our last three councils have said no to this. Our current council voted 9-0 not to use the incinerator. If it's so safe, why don't we leave it in Sydney? We shouldn't be their dumping ground. Things come up—there are grants that these people give to us. They're not voluntary; they're compulsory. Every time something happens, out come the happy snaps: Look what we've done for you. It's not necessarily always good.

We need a 110 per cent guarantee that there'll be no fallout. If there is—I've asked the question—what will happen to our livestock? "We'll get back to you on that." What will happen when it gets in the river? "We'll get back to you on that." But in the modelling, it shouldn't happen. The kids are going to have breathing problems out there, with asthma. Leaching into our water, as I said, is a big problem, and I believe it's the Government's problem not our district's problem. The school is only approximately five kays away, as the crow flies, and it's been brought up that there are beautiful mines up around the Hunter where the railway line runs around, and they are looking for stuff to put in it.

**WENDY ANDERSON**, before the Committee: I represent my family. In this land of storytelling, we remember and respect the care that has been taken for the past 60,000 years. We are told by the ABC that this is really an experimental incinerator because Australia has only been experimenting since 2024. I have a story, though, that I'd like to tell. In 1976 and '77, Ian and I travelled to Milan. We sat on the soil and ate the local vegetables from the gardens around us. I was in the early months of my first pregnancy. Our son was born. He was 9½ pounds—beautiful, perfect. Within days he was critically ill. Doctors discovered he had no ninth, tenth or twelfth cranial nerve. He could not cough, gag or swallow. His soft palate was paralysed, and half of his tongue was paper-thin. His lungs were filled with fluid.

Years later we were living in Singapore. I read about the 1976 Seveso dioxin disaster in Milan—a catastrophic accident exposing communities and people, animals and vegetables to one of the most toxic dioxins known, TCDD. I know what it is like to sit beside a crypt of a child that they say is dying. Seveso's accident released the equivalent of six tonnes. The Tarago waste-to-energy incinerator will release 456,000 tonnes over the

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30 years of its life. We are better than this. "Within limits," is what Veolia says and that is not a not-zero build-up. What would happen if there is an accident or an earthquake?

**CHARLOTTE PAYNE**, before the Committee: I represent myself. I live on a property in the Tarago region and I do not support the current incinerator proposed for Tarago. An incinerator was ruled out in Sydney due to the number of people who live there and the concerns to their health and the environment. Waste from the city is out of sight and out of mind for most people because it's someone else's problem. This highlights the fundamental flaw that the proposed incinerator is a bandaaid solution, as it does not address the root cause of minimising waste. Approval of such a facility would exacerbate the problem because, to justify the cost to keep it running, it then relies on a large, constant stream of waste to burn.

Prioritisation should instead be on waste avoidance, materials recovery and recycling at the source, where the waste is being generated, not 200 kilometres away. The locals get all of the impact and none of the benefit. In addition, Veolia already have a history of repeated noncompliances with managing their existing waste operations as per their environment protection licence. It has been documented on multiple occasions that Veolia has been issued penalties for leachate and odour. Regardless of any claims or promises Veolia make on the ability to safely and effectively operate an incinerator, the only thing that Veolia demonstrates is a clear pattern of disregard and negligence in their day-to-day operations.

To give you a personal snapshot, in the year to date, I have personally reported to the EPA over 40 occurrences of odour from the current operation at Veolia. Such reports are only generated when the odour is so unbearable that it is causing significant distress to myself and my family, and includes things like nausea, headaches and sleep disturbance. Outside of this, there have been hundreds if not thousands more times I've been personally impacted by the existing odour from Veolia's poor management at this existing facility. What credibility do Veolia now have to say that the impacts from an incinerator will be managed any different? I really hope you consider local and real voices in any further decision-making.

**CATE THOMAS**, before the Committee: I am representing the Gundaroo community. Gundaroo is 17 kilometres directly west of the Woodlawn site. We are a village and surrounds of about 1,500 people. The village is on the Yass River. Right on the doorstep of the village, we have 204 hectares of a nature reserve, Mcleods Creek Nature Reserve, and 70 hectares of a village common right on the edge of the village. Both contain endangered grasslands that are protected. The area is also a big area for boutique meat and fruit—clean, green food for the region. We have more than a dozen cool climate wineries in the area that attract a lot of tourism. Most of the tourism is Sydney short-stay tourists, which is ironic, because they want to put a waste thing right near us.

In 2024 Gundaroo won a New South Wales tourism award. We were in the top three. Gundaroo also has this beautiful—we call it the "summer doctor", the easterlies that come in right through at 7.00 p.m. every night in summer. All of this is threatened, we feel, by this incinerator. We already experience the smells that other people have talked about. We've been told that they will fix it and that kind of thing, and that has created a great lot of distrust in Veolia with the existing—what they do already, let alone an incinerator. Gundaroo also, as far as I understand, will not get any of the community or social benefits from Veolia. A lot of people in the community just feel that it is greenwashing and feel gaslit by Veolia. We feel it's not a legitimate industry at all.

**WARREN MATTHEWS**, before the Committee: Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak. I come with a history of 40 years as an environmental health officer with NSW Health, retired. I believe that the issue here is not waste disposal but waste generation. Australia generates way too much waste. We recycle only 13 per cent as opposed to other countries where they recycle up to 80 per cent or 90 per cent of their waste. We would have less of a problem with disposal of waste if we only focused on how we generate it. It is timely to be debating the burning of plastics while the world is fighting over oil. Oil is the main source of plastics. Australia has one of the lowest plastic recycling rates. Burning plastics produces more polluting chemicals than burning oil or coal and consumes almost as much energy as it generates. It requires huge volumes of water, and in the driest continent on earth that doesn't make much sense.

Companies that are producing or use plastics—over four million tonnes a year—or burn the waste have no interest in reducing waste. They are motivated by profit. Of a century where a vast majority of our waste has been sent to landfill, waste incineration is complex, impractical and less cost effective than landfill. In 50 years time we'll probably be mining our landfills to recover the plastics that we've disposed of. Like Woodlawn mine, there are disused mines across Australia. However, landfill is only sustainable if Australia makes a concerted effort to reduce, recycle and re-use. Eighty per cent of the waste that goes to landfill is plastic. By removing plastic from the waste stream we can prolong our landfills for a longer period of time. However, we must also develop and implement robust landfill management strategies to protect communities and the environment. My conclusion is: Look at the big picture. Incineration is not a silver bullet.

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**KEVIN WOODS**, before the Committee: I am a retired engineer. I was a subject matter expert on energy for the Federal Government. As such, I can speak with some authority and not simply nimby sentiment. This incinerator proposal poses real health and environmental risks and should be rejected. Labelling the proposed Tarago general waste incinerator as "waste to energy" is like putting lipstick on a pig—it's still a pig. There will be some energy produced, but at what long-term health and environmental cost? In fact, Commonwealth renewables policies specifically excluded incineration of general waste due to its damaging environmental impact. Let's be blunt about the motive. This is purely financial. Reducing landfill volume to prolong Woodlawn as Sydney's dumping ground is very short-sighted, replacing an immediate problem with long-lasting impacts. It prioritises an urban waste budget over regional health and local economies.

Cynically, I see that Sydney councils are now seeking a return of waste limits to aid in recycling while at the same time continuing to send their waste elsewhere. If the incineration is so safe, why not put it closer to where the waste is produced and then save money transporting the reduced volume of landfill? General waste includes a lot of plastics. Even as a child, 70 years ago, I knew burning plastic was bad. We haven't learned. Incinerators emit fine particulate matter, toxic metals and persistent organic pollutants—dioxins, furans and PFAS. Modern incineration plants reduce but do not eliminate these emissions. This is not just a Tarago problem. The toxins travel on the wind, bioaccumulate, contaminate soil and water, and raise risks of respiratory disease, cancer and developmental harm to children. European studies repeatedly show contamination of soil, water, food and even human tissue around waste-to-energy plants. Do we really want more PFAS contamination and potential litigation? Look at the damage PFAS has already caused. Properties with PFAS contamination—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Woods. Your time is up.

**Mr PAUL BEILEITER**, before the Committee: I am a Tarago resident. Enough is enough. Tarago has just copped the end of the stick. We've got two wind farms going in at the moment. They turned up on the doorstep the other day—Veolia. They're putting another 20 wind towers in. We've already got wind towers out there. We don't need more. We've got one of the biggest asbestos pits in Australia. It's coming from Queensland, the asbestos. Enough is enough. We just can't handle any more. As far as Veolia, it'd be 18 years now that we've put up with the smell. When it wakes you up in summer time, in the middle of the night, and you've got to get up and close your windows because of the smell, but the EPA don't want to do anything about it, it's just so wrong.

You ring the EPA, you get a call centre. They don't have the decency to even ring you back. It's so wrong. But my biggest thing is, they will not give us a guarantee on our water. I want it tested every three months, on a regular basis. I want our land values guaranteed, so if this all turns to—whatever you want to call it—we're backed up, like, the Government is going to back us up, or someone's going to. That money needs to go into a trust now for every landholder out there, or any resident, so if this all turns to crap, we've got something to fall back on, because an average house out there is a million dollars, just in town. If this goes pear-shaped and we walk away for \$100,000, you can't sell your house. Anyway, that's my view.

**FIONA JEFFERY**, before the Committee: I am a primary producer living near Tarago. In Tarago, we already personally experience how ineffective the New South Wales Government safeguards are for protecting our quality of life and environment from the profiteering of Veolia. One way Veolia proposes to reassure the community about the proper operation of its incinerator is to have a community consultative committee. I spent almost three years on Veolia's current community committee, and this is very concerning to me. I have documented numerous occasions where Veolia misled the committee to its advantage, avoided disclosing information that was key to problems the community was experiencing, or outright lied to the committee. In one instance, after months of severe odour and significant discussion at the committee meeting, Veolia failed to disclose that a key reason for the stench locals were experiencing was the build-up of non-aerated leachate. This was caused by them deliberately blocking a huge industrial drain. This created a lake of leachate to build up and fester.

The community only found out because Veolia was issued with an EPA notice not long after the meeting. What happens when an incinerator is built and this scenario is instead months of sick children and locals with breathing problems after Veolia's incinerator has been emitting pollution above the safeguard levels? It's very obvious that without billion-dollar fines and immediate and permanent plant shutdown penalties for noncompliance, there's no government measure that can remotely protect us from an incinerator. Our town is already held hostage to the monopoly Veolia has on New South Wales waste management. No government standards can protect us from a corporation that already stands in our backyard and lies to our faces about the stinking turd it just dropped on our lawn. Thank you.

**DARRELL WEEKES**, before the Committee: Madam Chair, Committee members, I am the Regional President for Business NSW, member of the New South Wales Business Council, and immediate past president of the Goulburn Chamber of Commerce. You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone more pro-business than me, but

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not at the expense of the community that that business does not serve. I am not here to oppose waste to energy in principle; I am here to oppose this project, in this place. Ask yourself, why do all four proposed waste-to-energy sites sit outside the Sydney Basin and squarely in regional areas? It's Sydney's waste—why don't they burn it in their own backyard? It's because, like their hamburgers and their lamb chops, people in Sydney want someone else, somewhere else, to do the dirty work.

A few years ago I chaired a meeting between project consultants and some of the generational landowners at Tarago—people who produce some of the finest food in the world, on some of the best arable land in the country. The consultants nodded, smiled, took notes and made promises. Every single promise they made, they broke. They were there to tick a box that said they'd listened—and they hadn't. Consider this: The New South Wales Government's own energy-from-waste policy states that these projects can only proceed where community acceptance has been obtained. There is no community acceptance here. The 619 formal objections speak to that, an extraordinary number for a regional planning issue. And here's what makes this worse: Similar projects were proposed in Sydney and rejected after community backlash, so the State Government changed the framework to allow them to be in regional areas instead and is now actively reviewing and expanding that framework. The people of Tarago have been lied to, misled, dismissed and ignored by the proponents, the consultants and the New South Wales Government. This incinerator is simply in the wrong place. The only people who can't see that are the ones who think the residents of Tarago don't matter. Thank you.

**PETER McCULLAGH**, before the Committee: I want to talk about nanoparticles. They get their name from the word "nanometre", which is a billionth of a metre in length. These particles are extremely small, very difficult to detect and even more difficult to exclude. They are generated by incineration, whereas Veolia calls it heat treatment—whatever that is. They can penetrate much further into the lung than asbestos or silica. They can crush into the bloodstream, cross the blood-brain barrier. This morning I bailed up the US national medical library and typed in two words: "nanoparticles" and "lung". I got 6,241 responses. I think you'd get more this evening. They represent scientific papers published examining this issue. Nanoparticles are extremely difficult to detect and even more difficult to stop. The effects of the smell going over Tarago have already been very vividly described.

I would regard having such a stream of air, which potentially contains nanoparticles, passing over a school with kids under 10 as criminal and nothing less. Going forward a decade or two and you are likely to have teenage, young people with extremely severe illnesses, many of which may not be very well treatable. I'm a former pathologist. It is criminal for this to be occurring. The responsibility for it rests not only with Veolia but also with the politicians. Several electoral terms later it will be remembered—if this is approved—which politicians approved it. Veolia's very poor performance in relation to truth has already been covered. I would additionally point out that when the original papers came out—six big volumes—they said they would be having an inquiry and responding—not a bit out of it. Finally, what is Veolia up to now? Basically going around the country communities and local government, trying to splash cash and buy something to cover the bad odour.

**PAUL DAVEY**, before the Committee: I am the chair of the cross-party working group against waste incinerators in the Goulburn Mulwaree area and I'm also the senior minister of the St Nick's family of Anglican churches across the Southern Tablelands. I am here to say that there is no social licence for the building of waste incinerators in this area. Our community stands united against waste incineration here or anywhere. It is lazy Government policy that does not deal with the root causes of our waste problem in Sydney. We are aghast that Sydney should propose to ban it for themselves but allow it here. Because of the way that has been done, there will never be a social licence in this area for waste incineration. The well has been well and truly poisoned. And I would say to the Committee that it—and the Government—ought to plan for other ways of dealing with the rubbish, because this community will not give up. We will keep fighting and we will keep fighting and we will keep fighting. And we will not take Sydney's rubbish to breathe in and drink in and eat in. Thank you.

**DAVID STENSON**, before the Committee: I'm a retired rail safety worker. Who has seen the large waste transfer facility near Clyde Station? It was built to process far more than it is currently handling. Rail consists—the make-up of freight wagons in a train—are very regulated, for example, no flour adjacent to coal or liquid fuel. Such regulations are the result of whole towns being razed by train fires and explosions in other countries. Consists ex-Clyde will be longer and more frequent. Contents of containers from domestic waste will include tonnes of combustibles, hydrocarbons, bleach, hydrogen peroxide, garden fertilisers, urea, lithium batteries and other chemicals which can combust, and all compressed together. Does anyone know what will be in the commercial and industrial waste?

Consists will be hauled through multiple suburbs, towns and forests before reaching Tarago. In the west they will go through the inaccessible 10 tunnels to Lithgow and, eventually, we will probably get double-stacks from Victoria up the Inland Rail to Parkes. Where will a burning or exploding freight train stop? Just braking distance from where the air hoses are burnt out—probably one or two kilometres. This will be the first indication

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to the train crew of the disaster in their wake. Please put sorting facilities at Clyde, Lucas Heights and other suitable sites near where the rubbish is generated. Rubbish should be sorted into combustibles, metals, plastics, timber, glass and other recyclables. Don't waste millions of litres of diesel fuel hauling your rubbish from your backyard to our backyard, risking death and destruction along the way.

**BELINDA MAHER**, before the Committee: I stand before you as a mother, a schoolteacher, a farmer and the founder of a natural skincare company. I speak on behalf of Tarago Preschool to register our absolute unwavering objection to Veolia's proposed toxic incinerator. Our community-based preschool currently cares for 43 children, with 38 more on the waitlist, and employs seven local staff. As educators, our legal and moral mandate is to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of children. This proposed facility makes that impossible. The preschool relies entirely on tank water. While we have filters, they cannot eliminate the forever chemicals that will surely emit from this incinerator and settle on our preschool roof, farmland and local communities. In my natural products company I understand the danger of microdosing harsh toxins over long periods. Our bodies are designed to thrive, not merely survive, and if they are forever trying to fight toxic chemicals emitted by this proposed facility, what does that look like for our children?

When toxic emissions blanket our playground, what happens when our children engage in play? They will be chronically and unknowingly exposed to these particles. Are we willing to gamble the developing bodies of our children on the corporate promise of acceptable emissions? Child care is a critical sector, so why should a 50-year-old vital community institution face closure and its staff face job uncertainty simply because our town is being treated as a sacrificial zone? This is not just a Tarago problem. We sit within Sydney's greater water catchment area. If toxic ash is raining down on our preschool and our farmland, where do we think that run-off is going? Are we prepared to compromise the water supply of millions of people for the sake of cheap waste disposal? We already endure the unacceptable number of EPA fines, the penalties and variation notices, not to mention the unacceptable odours. We refuse to accept toxic ash as our new normal.

**IAN McCORMACK**, before the Committee: I was raised in the coal-fired power industry, where I was soon made aware of the toxic boiler ash and toxic flue gases produced by burning coal. This energy-from-waste facility proposal is similar to coal-fired power in that it would be a fossil fuel power station augmented by garbage. Coal can be easily measured for toxins, not so garbage. There are so many toxins to evaluate. Burning garbage will concentrate in the ash, which needs to be disposed of somewhere. The toxins in the flue gases will be spread around the countryside. If, on the other hand, the garbage is not burned, there will no toxic gases and no highly toxic concentrate to deal with. It is hoped that science will be encouraged to find a solution to deal with garbage and, when it does, do it in Sydney, not here.

**HOWARD KNEEBONE**: I am a mechanical engineer, board member of Endeavour Industries for 18 years, and board chairman for five. Endeavour is Goulburn city's resource recovery operation for kerbside recycling. I have seen the contamination that comes in the bins and it's not pretty. I'm not against waste to energy when the design and location are correct. I've worked on Liddell, Bayswater, Tarong power stations, internationally on Ratchaburi power station in Thailand. I have significant knowledge related to thermal power generation. For 20 years I ran the Goulburn Wool Scour. I have knowledge of dual-head burner systems designed to thermally destruct toxic and odoriferous gases with steam energy recovery.

Power stations need a lot of cooling water to run condensers. Tarago has no river or ocean access. A few ponds at Veolia bioreactor as a reliable water source is a failure. Tarago's 100-year average rainfall is 670 millimetres. The average evaporation is 1.3 metres—double the rainfall. Natural gas is essential for complete thermal destruction of toxic materials. Temperatures above 1,200 degrees are required. Internationally, they use dual burner systems to guarantee that temperature. Relying on the waste material introduces massive temperature fluctuations due to variable moisture content. Overseas experience shows people care less about recycling when they have waste-to-energy plants operating. Valuable materials that can be recycled just get burnt.

In conclusion, Tarago doesn't have a permanent water supply and doesn't have natural gas. The winds in Tarago district are predominantly west. This means that any toxic fallout will be on the roofs of Tarago village. Tarago houses rely on roof rainwater catchment for clean water supply. Finally, the right location is Kurnell. They have natural gas, ocean cooling water, close to Sydney waste, a ready market for generated electricity and prevailing westerly winds going offshore.

**JOHN MENDEL**: I'm a Goulburn district resident. Enough is enough. In the Upper Lachlan shire there is a wind turbine every 21 square kilometres. If the Limerick development goes ahead, the shire will be generating income for foreign ownership of about \$1.5 billion. We have significant solar farms and expect another one on the Gundry Plains, just outside Goulburn. We have the HumeLink powerlines installed to supply Snowy 2.0 power to Sydney. The renewable energy drive has significant environmental issues—the cement, the destroying of trees for the turbines and the powerlines, let alone the major roadworks on private property. The

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turbines have a maximum life of 20 years. Some haven't lasted five. What about the removal of the cement, the turbines and restoring the land to be productive again? Are foreign owners going to care? The damage to our rural industry is, and will be, significant. Now you are planning a waste facility at Tarago. All this is within 60 kilometres of Goulburn. I believe in renewable energy, but at what cost? The Goulburn district has done more than its fair share. Why are there no turbines at Bondi Beach? Let Sydney take care of their own waste, rather than our backyard. Thank you.

**CHRISTOPHER KLOSTER**, before the Committee: I am a landholder on Braidwood Road and accountant. Despite producing the rubbish destined for Tarago, Sydney doesn't want the incinerator in Sydney. This has now been legislated—please explain. Industrial-scale transition is coming to country New South Wales to try and fix Sydney's problems by sending it elsewhere. If I were a cynic, I would regard that as a political decision. But being naive and having faith in our process, I believe that decision was based on science. An incinerator will be detrimental to the health of nearby residents. Out of sight and out of mind is no way to change attitudes needed to reduce waste production. People in the cities don't turn their lights out and they do not reduce their waste—70,000 coffee cups a week are produced and consumed in Bondi alone.

This is a photo of an incinerator in Denmark which produces a large plume 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Many of the farms under the Tarago plume are in the Sydney water catchment. This is a piece of cow poo. It is innocuous—it's just chewed-up grass. This is a sign on some of the gates on my farm. It says, "Keep livestock out, by order of Hawkesbury Nepean catchment authority." If you don't want cow poo in Sydney's water, you definitely don't want toxic particles. The incinerator should not be built at Tarago. There are just too many risks. Just like cane toads and thalidomide, we do not want to find out when it's too late—after the horse has bolted and the damage cannot be reversed.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Kloster. You're very lucky that props aren't allowed in Parliament either.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** That doesn't stop them from using them.

**ANNE MITCHELL**, before the Committee: My husband retired two years ago as a Sydney train driver and we moved here. One of the reasons was for better air quality. I don't want to deal with Sydney's waste anymore.

**DENNIS MITCHELL**, before the Committee: I am a retired train driver from Sydney Trains. We moved to Goulburn, as my wife said, for better air quality because we have quite a few asthmatics in the family. One of the reasons we moved down here was for better air quality. I think if Veolia really want to bury their waste somewhere, maybe they could go to Tibooburra. That's all I've got to say. No incinerator in Goulburn.

**JOHN LYTTLE**, before the Committee: I've got a farm out on the Braidwood Road, about 20 kays east of the proposed incinerator. We've been farming there for 50 years, but we don't want this incinerator because of what everybody else has said—that it's just going to be detrimental to our livestock, the river, the environment and people. I mean, if the corroboree frog and the rare and endangered species of the yellow belly nut slinger were involved, we wouldn't be having this discussion.

**JANE SMOLINSKI**, before the Committee: I want to say "ditto", but I guess that's what Sydney's doing. I know that's a cop-out. The mushroom cloud or the umbrella cloud theory, that's what we're talking about, where Tarago may not be the victim initially of this catastrophic negative environmental descent but Goulburn and many surrounding locations will be. Let's not mention the leaching into the water table, dispersing much further problems like forever chemicals. I moved to Goulburn with my family only a few years ago to get away from the smog and the fumes. Since moving to Goulburn, it has been noticeably healthier and positive for us. I can breathe much better, without Ventolin or any other intervention, and I'd hate to have to move again and isolate myself or my family. We cannot approve of the decline of our health or our future—not for this. There must be another answer.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Smolinski. With that, you can all give yourselves a rousing round of applause. Thank you all very much for your very respectful behaviour towards each other and Committee members. We very much appreciate your time and the effort that you've taken to be here with us this afternoon to present your views and points of opinion. We look forward to the public hearing, which will commence at 9.00 a.m. tomorrow. You are all welcome to come along and witness proceedings throughout the morning. Our proceedings for the afternoon have concluded. Thank you once again for being with us.

**The Committee adjourned at 17:40.**