

**From:** [anthony johnson](#)  
**To:** [DPE PS Industry Assessments Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** (Woodlawn ARC: SSD-21184278)  
**Date:** Thursday, 8 December 2022 10:55:50 AM

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Anthony Johnson  
1703 Braidwood Road  
TARAGO NSW 2580

I Anthony Johnson acknowledge and accept the Department's disclaimer and declaration.

I Anthony Johnson **Object** to the proposal by (Woodlawn ARC: SSD-21184278)

I Anthony Johnson declare that I have NO reportable political donations.

## **Veolia's incinerator isn't necessary.**

1. It simply isn't necessary - at current volumes (which Veolia have stated they are not seeking to increase) the existing Woodlawn landfill has a remaining useful life of 25 years. Implementation of the NSW Government's circular economy policies will reduce volumes of residual waste, which will extend that life even longer. There is no need to divert one-third of waste received by Veolia in Tarago to an incinerator which will pollute the region when there is sufficient capacity already in their existing landfill which captures methane emissions to fuel/power generator that create and supply electricity to the grid.

## **Toxic to our health and environment**

1. Veolia's incinerator proposal will emit toxic air pollution 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for 25 years, which will spread throughout the region from Canberra to Goulburn, Braidwood, Bungendore, Murrumbateman, Gunning, Marulan, Yass and more.
2. Pollution from the proposed incinerator will includes acid gases, toxic heavy metal particulates (mercury, lead cadmium) and persistent organic particulates (dioxins, furans, PCBs, PFAS). Particulate pollution can lead to decreased lung function, cardiac disease and death. In addition to polluting the air, dioxins and furans will accumulate in the surrounding environment over time in soil and water and are absorbed by plants, crops and animals.

3. Food contaminated by incinerator toxins can cause cancer, miscarriage, infant deaths, developmental delays, reproductive issues, heart disease and respiratory impairment.
4. The proposal will create 2.2million tonnes of toxic waste ash, including 380,000 tonnes of air pollution control residue (fly ash) which is classified as hazardous waste by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). All of this will be dumped on site, risking further contamination of soil and groundwater as well as the Sydney water catchment. Veolia's track record of polluting local groundwaters (recognised by EPA prevention notice in October 2022) proves they cannot be trusted to safely manage such toxic outputs.
5. This incinerator will impact the health of our children, grandchildren and their grandchildren through the accumulation of forever chemicals in the surrounding environment. It is an intergenerational burden and legacy which cannot be allowed to go ahead.
6. The NSW Government acknowledges in its own Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan that waste incinerators impact human health stating "Populations can still experience health impacts when emissions are below the national standards, and for some common air pollutants, there is no safe threshold of impact".
7. In 2019, academics from the Australian National University Medical School, the Public Health Association of Australia, and Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australia completed a systematic review of the health impacts of waste incineration, which was published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health in 2020 and referenced by the NSW Government Chief Scientist and Engineer in his report to the NSW Minister for Environment that same year. This report concluded that "there is insufficient evidence to conclude that any incinerator is safe" and in particular "contamination of food and ingestion of pollutants is a significant risk pathway for both nearby and distant residents".
8. The proposal has already caused significant detrimental negative impact to surrounding communities' mental health by increasing anxiety and depression. This will only be increased if the project goes ahead as those living nearby continue to stress about when their health will start to show the impacts of the pollution from the facility, or having to stay indoors.
9. The proposed incinerator will exceed NSW government safety standards for air emissions during start-up, shut-down and many other 'non-standard' operating conditions. Veolia's overseas incinerators often exceed safety standards and Veolia has a track record locally for failing to comply with license conditions at their existing Woodlawn facility.

# **Waste incineration is not recycling and contributes to climate change**

1. I do not agree with the characterisation of waste incineration as renewable energy generation, nor that it will reduce greenhouse emissions or reliance on fossil fuels. Unlike wind and solar generated power, waste doesn't come from infinite natural processes. It is sourced from finite resources – minerals, fossil fuels and forests that are cut down at an unsustainable rate. Plastic is a petroleum by-product. Burning it is the same as burning fossil fuel and produces similar emissions.
2. Veolia's claims that incineration is better than landfill due to methane emissions is flawed as it ignores the fact that methane produced from their landfill is captured which prevents it from entering the atmosphere. They also utilise this to generate power which is pumped into the grid. This process is much better for the environment as it does not produce the CO<sub>2</sub>, air pollution and toxic ash by-products an incinerator does.
3. This incinerator will contribute to climate change by emitting 140,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>) each year. To approve the project is inconsistent with the NSW government commitment to Net 0 emissions by 2030.
4. Incinerators reduce recycling rates by destroying discarded products and creating a disincentive to local councils by locking them into long-term contracts requiring them to supply consistent volumes of waste for incineration over decades. They are incompatible with a circular economy – they replace one waste stream (municipal/commercial/industrial waste) with contaminated ash.

## **Economic impact**

1. This project is in direct conflict with alternative development and growth in the local area. Maintenance of successful local agricultural businesses, along with increased growth in rural- residential developments expected over the next 10-20 years will sustainably increase the size and diversity of the local community, supporting local businesses, volunteer organisations such as the NSW RFS, CWA and local schools. In contrast this proposal would risk the viability of local agricultural businesses, reduce existing residential developments as families move away due to the health and environmental pollution, and put a halt to any further long-term local business development or growth in rural residential developments as the area.
2. It is clear there are limited economic benefits to the community from this project. Despite claims made by Veolia in the EIS, there are only a very small number of ongoing jobs created and required in order to manage and maintain the

incinerator once constructed. Most of these workers will not reside in the local impacted community and would commute from either Goulburn, Bungendore or Canberra. The creation of this small number of jobs would in no way make up for the negative economic impact of reduced local population due to impacted families moving away, and halt to future growth which will result in pressure put on the viability of local businesses, schools and community organisations.

3. Employment rates in the local region are high – the jobs this project proposes aren't needed in the local economy and there simply aren't the people to fill them. It would likely both steal employees away from existing regional businesses struggling in the current economic environment and utilise significant numbers of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) employees who take and spend their money back home away from the local region. There also simply isn't enough housing in the local area for these proposed workers – there are currently no vacant rental properties in Tarago, so any workers would be forced to surrounding towns again resulting in no economic benefit to the local area which is most impacted.
4. There are no requirements for jobs and growth in Goulburn Mulwaree to justify this proposal. The Department of Regional NSW has not listed this LGA as requiring significant investment, nor is it included in any of its Special Activation Precincts or Regional Job precincts. The unemployment rate in this region is lower than both the state and national unemployment rates.

## **Not safe for Sydney, not safe anywhere.**

1. In July 2018, the Eastern Creek waste incinerator in Sydney was rejected by the NSW Independent Planning Commission as not being in the public interest. The reasons included concerns about safety, insufficient evidence that the pollution control technologies would be capable of managing emissions, concern about the relationship between air quality impacts and water quality impacts, the possibility of adverse environmental outcomes, and concern about site suitability and human health impacts. Since then, the NSW Government has banned toxic waste incinerators in Sydney due to the risk to human health. The risks have not changed since that decision back in 2018 – this project must also be rejected - If they aren't safe for Sydney then they aren't safe for Tarago.

## **No social license**

1. The NSW Energy from Waste Policy states that incinerator proposals are only valid where “community acceptance to operate such a process has been obtained”. There is no community acceptance for a facility in Tarago or anywhere in the Southern Tablelands.
2. Social license is made up of three components:

- Legitimacy – do they play by the rules?
  - Credibility – do they provide honest information?
  - Trust – can the community be confident that they will do what they say?
3. Veolia have spent over 15 years failing to operate their existing Woodlawn facility within license conditions, have received multiple infringements, failed to inform the community of pollution to the environment, and attempted to withhold information from the community under freedom of information processes.
  4. Veolia's track record shows they break the rules, hide information from the community and pollute the environment.

## Cumulative impact

1. This project area is surrounded by prime agricultural land and hundreds of rural residential developments, as well as numerous potential future developments as a result of subdivision. The locality is already saturated with state significant projects and Veolia's proposal would place an unacceptable cumulative impact on the local and surrounding communities and environment. Veolia note in the EIS that there are another seven active state significant projects in the local area. This is on top of the existing multiple state significant projects Veolia operates at Woodlawn including a landfill, bioenergy plant, mechanical and biological treatment (MBT) facility, wind farm and solar farm. The local area is also surrounded by many other existing state significant projects in addition to the seven listed by Veolia in the EIS – Capital I, II and Collector Wind Farms, Capital Solar farm and numerous other smaller, but still large scale quarry developments.
2. The town has suffered impacts from the Woodlawn site for almost 45 years. The first 20 years from zinc, lead and copper mining undertaken on site, and the last 15 years from Veolia breaching its license conditions through impacting the surrounding region with unbearable odour impacts. The local town is also living with significant lead contamination in and surrounding the rail corridor, including local residences, which has directly impacted the long-term health of the community and young residents, due to long standing impacts from the previous Woodlawn mine.

### AIR QUALITY.

The Woodlawn bio reactor (TIP) precinct on Collector Road TARAGO continues to foul the air of the local district, I have made many phone calls to the NSW Environmental Protection Agency, after hours number 131 555 and recorded my concerns. Evidence of this includes having to shut my windows and retreat inside my house which has severely affected my rural lifestyle. I have been physically sick by the gaseous odour, vomiting and dry reaching in my own paddock whilst trying to

undertake my own on farm duties.

I have not received an explanation from the EPA as to why air quality is not seen or treated with the same urgency as water or soil degradation. The issue of extremely poor air quality in the Tarago district is being ignored by the New South Wales Government.

The Woodlawn bio reactor (TIP) precinct has failed the Tarago community for many years by not being able manage the odour that is an on ongoing and persistent degradation of air quality.

I am aware of Woodlawn staff/contractors that have left the Woodlawn precinct and travelled to Bungendore village to do work in order to escape from the odour at the Woodlawn Bio reactor on Collector Road TARAGO.

I would like to remind those reviewing these submissions, EPA, local politicians; that the Woodlawn Bio Reactor, Collector Road TARAGO, is located within the Greater Sydney Water Catchment Area, time can only tell if there will be any long term impact on Sydney, Canberra and Queanbeyan's water supply.

Regards

Anthony Johnson

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