

**Objection submission to the
Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre (application number SSD –
21184278)**

Submitted by :

Felicity Reynolds of “Twyzel” 2724 Braidwood Rd, Lake Bathurst, NSW, 2580.

I declare I have made no political donations over the last 2 years

I acknowledge and accept the Department’s disclaimer and declaration.

Executive Summary

My name is Felicity Reynolds and I live with my husband, Simon and young son at “Twyzel” 2724 Braidwood Rd, Lake Bathurst, 2580 and we own a property commencing approximately 2km from the proposed incinerator site. We strongly object to Veolia’s proposed Advanced Energy Recovery Centre(ARC) being built in Tarago to incinerate 380,000 tonnes of Sydney’s rubbish each year.

Submission

I am writing this submission on behalf of my husband, Simon Reynolds, our son, Harry and myself. Simon and I very strongly object to the proposed Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre.

Veolia’s proposed ARC at the Woodlawn Ecoprecinct is a significant threat to our future for many reasons including but not limited to these:

Threat to our 5th generation family farm

We want to ensure for our son and our unborn child that the land is there for them to have the opportunity to continue the family tradition. My husband is a fifth-generation farmer at Lake Bathurst, with his forefathers arriving in the 1850’s. His family has spent the last 170 years looking after and working their land to not only produce quality agricultural products but also to ensure the land is protected and, there for generations to come.

Threat to Air, Soil and Water quality

While Veolia claim changes to air quality will be not be significant enough to have adverse effects, however they will be introducing high volumes of gases such as sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides and hydrogen chloride. It is hard to imagine that this won’t have an effect on air quality and subsequently soil and water especially since their calculations were not based on actual current air quality surrounding Tarago rather Canberra (which is largely urban), Bargo and Goulburn as they claim there is no baseline for this region. Similarly. it is hard to believe that the by-products of dioxins and furans won’t have an adverse effect on air, soil and water.

There is also a very real potential for adverse changes to water quality through possible leaching into ground water from toxic fly ash.

Threat to health both human and livestock

These adverse changes to the air, soil and water quality have the potential to significantly impact our health. This threat to human health was acknowledged by Tait et al (2020) when he stated that it is *"Premature to conclude that these newer technologies improve safety"* along with *"there is insufficient evidence to conclude that any incinerator is safe"*.

Similarly, the ARC could also potentially impact our stock adversely. The by-products of the incinerator such as dioxin and furan have the capacity to build up in the fatty deposits of our stock, reduce fertility of stock, contaminate wool and potentially contaminate or reduce crop production.

While Veolia claim this won't be the case as the levels they will produce will be undetectable. I have little trust in this statement given that I have asked the company repeatedly to produce actual evidence not just modelling that this is not the case in Staffordshire, England. I have asked for both soil and carcass sampling to be done to allay our local agricultural communities' fears. The claim they are unable to do this as they do not know what other materials the English farmers have been introducing to their land.

In this day and age, we find the above claim of Veolia preposterous, as Australian farmers, we are held accountable to both state and federal government standards and regulations. Consequently we must have the records detailing specific crop and pasture chemicals and fertilisers we have applied. Similarly any animal treatments including dips, drenches and vaccines must be accounted for. As such, a reliable record of what has been introduced to stock and land is readily available. Additionally, there is minimal chance we would ever introduce such toxins as dioxins, furans and heavy metals and it is these chemicals I am asking them to test for in the Staffordshire stock.

Therefore, it appears to us that there is a hesitancy due to fear of what these results might be. As consumers and exporters become more discerning as to the quality of products, it is likely further and more advanced testing will be completed in the future and will our stock and crops measure up to this with Veolia's stack producing known toxins to humans and livestock.

Need for Soil, land and Air baselines

While we strongly maintain this project should not go ahead, if it does, substantial air, water and soil baselines need to be undertaken in a wide perimeter around the proposed site. There should be ongoing regular sampling of air, water (including residential tanks) and soil to continue to confirm there is no change to their composition, and if there is, it needs to be both rectified and compensated for. Regardless of Veolia and health experts claims that the emissions will be insignificant to human health, the simple question is why should our families have to drink water contaminated with heavy metals, dioxins and furans? History has established time and again that chemicals once thought to be safe for human consumption at low levels is not the case. Therefore, any perceptible changes to air, soil and water pose an unacceptable risk to human and livestock health.

Possibility of agricultural produce being downgraded.

A further agricultural consideration is the increasing traceability of stock and produce to its source through electronic tags and technology. Consider the current marketing strategies of Country Road promoting wool directly from properties in Tasmania and restaurants and butchers marketing their meats directly from specific farms and locations. How is this going to affect us and our business in the future? Will our current prime product be downgraded as a result of being grown directly next to an incinerator regardless of whether it is contaminated or not? This needs to be considered especially when a research article in the Journal of Australian and New Zealand Public Health clearly states that *"new incinerators should be located away from areas of food production"* (Tait et al,2020, pg 46).

Effect on Land Values

Our land value and saleability has already been affected due to its direct location with the proposed incinerator and this will be compounded further should the project be given the go ahead. Our land value could reduce by as much as half per hectare. This is a significant economic disadvantage to not only my family but others in the region. This affects us in multiple ways including bank equity, inability to relocate should contamination or product discrimination occur and general financial stress. I don't feel this has been considered by Veolia in their social impact statement and no consideration for indemnity or liability has been made. I strongly feel this immediate drop in equity for all local residents needs to not only be considered by Veolia but compensated for, should the project go ahead

Protection – liability and indemnity insurance

Furthermore, if this project was unfortunately to be approved, we are looking for indemnity and liability insurance from both Veolia and NSW government that our agricultural enterprise and family's health will be protected from contamination. As a result, if our land and livestock was to be contaminated, our products devalued or our land unfit to produce agriculture products, we would expect an indemnity fund to be available to purchase our land and livestock at above the prime value for an agricultural enterprise not in the vicinity of the incinerator.

This fund would enable us to purchase new land and livestock allowing the relocation of our enterprise. This would be a heartbreaking situation for my family should it arise as my husband and his family have worked for almost two centuries to not only improve and establish this land but have fought for it and held on to it during drought, wars and economic recessions and depressions. This is far, far longer than Veolia has existed as a company. We need to remember agriculture has been the mainstay of rural and regional economies since Australia was settled and has helped develop and grow these regional communities. This agricultural history is of far more significance compared to Veolia's contribution over the last twenty years. Just donating money does not make them community advocates rather it has often been money to placate the community for the detriment and inconvenience the company is causing the community.

Evidence that Veolia has already failed the Tarago community

This brings me to my last and important point: the numerous ways Veolia has failed our community in the last 20 years. This has resulted in the significant lack of trust we have in them to manage and protect our environment and future. Since the current Woodlawn sites inception there have been regular license breaches and adverse incidents including: -

- Regular odour breaches which can be smelt throughout our property and which, incidentally, were promised never to be an issue to this community when the landfill and bioreactor was first commissioned
- Containers leaching toxic chemicals onto railway tracks
- More recently and most significantly contamination of Crisps Creek which flows directly into the Mulwaree River and straight through our property. If this was to occur with the toxic by-products of the proposed incinerator this would likely render any paddocks associated with the river unusable.

Lack of trust given Veolia's track record over the last 20 years

- How are we meant to trust them when Veolia say they won't breach their operating conditions and release toxins into the community?
- How are we meant to trust Veolia with more sophisticated technology than they are currently managing and be confident it won't have greater negative impacts than the current bioreactor?
- What if Veolia gets it wrong? Unfortunately, Veolia's track record over the last 20 years suggests they will get it wrong.
- What safeguards will be put in place for my family as a fine by the EPA will not protect us or our livelihood?

Complete Opposition to the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre

Finally, my husband Simon and I stand in complete opposition to the Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre (application number SSD - 21184278) and leave you with these final questions.

- Would you risk your family's health living next to an Advanced Energy Recovery Centre or if you call it what is an incinerator?
- Would you want your family drinking tank water caught within a 10 km radius of the incinerator?
- Would you knowingly eat meat produced in a 10 km radius of said incinerator given other options?
- Do you think it is fair that our land is significantly devalued, our business potentially rendered unviable, and our financial stability taken away with no thought or compensation?

References

Tait, P. W. et al (2020). The health impacts of waste incineration: a systematic review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of public health* 44(1), 40-48.

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