

9th December, 2022

Ms Sally Munk
NSW Department of Planning and
Environment
Major Projects
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Dear Ms Munk

**RE: OBJECTION TO WOODLAWN ADVANCED ENERGY RECOVERY CENTRE (ARC)
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) - APPLICATION NUMBER: SSD-21184278**

I wish to be able to add to this submission if I deem it necessary.

I have not made any reportable donations to any political party.

I acknowledge and accept the Department of Environment & Planning's disclaimer and declaration.

My full name is George Alex Mortensen.

I live at "Silver Lining" 48 Faithfull Lane, Quialigo ,NSW 2580

Mob: 0434 286 311 Email: alexgamort@gmail.com

I strongly OBJECT to the proposed incinerator.

PREAMBLE:

My wife, Ekaterina Mortensen, and I live at 48 Faithfull Lane, Quialigo, NSW 2580 less than 22kms NE of Woodlawn, the site for the proposed incinerator, near Tarago, I am George Alex Mortensen (aka Alex Mortensen) and have lived on my beautiful, clean, healthy 42 hectares of land for over 33 years. Back in 1987, a real estate agent had shown me virtually every rural block within 20kms of Goulburn. On showing me his final one, we were standing at where the gate would be and he told me it wasn't yet officially on the market and could only guess where the boundaries were. I was enchanted with what was in front of me and said this is exactly what I want - I'll buy it! Two weeks later it was advertised for sale and with 2 simple phone calls the deal was made. I came the next weekend and on this occasion, some beautiful cumulus clouds lined with their silver-white edges provided me with the name for my property – "Silver Lining" and, indeed, this property is the silver lining of my life. At first, I grazed merino sheep but now, with no livestock, we just enjoy our woodlands and grasslands that, with no fertilisers for about 20 years, are becoming more natural. We have a wide variety of native vegetation and wildlife.

I was living here long before Veolia established its Bio-reactor at Woodlawn and now have developed their proposal for a so-called "Energy from Waste" Incinerator. (EfW).

Most disappointingly and with disregard for the health and safety of us and all those who live in the wide region that will be exposed to toxic fumes and ashes, the NSW government appears to be fully in support of this proposal and for another three of them in regional locations in NSW.

From being a resident in my healthy, safe environment I am now very afraid we will be living in a place that will be well within the fallout zone of toxic, cancer-causing fumes.

Being part of the wider Tarago and District Community, I am absolutely opposed to the construction and running of the proposed incinerator near Tarago and indeed at any other location in NSW. My wife will submit a separate submission.

REASONS FOR MY OPPOSITION:

1. **I understand that Veolia is supposed to inform and educate the Community**

- a). I am part of the Community and live in an area that will be affected by the garbage incinerator's fallout. I have never received any information from Veolia about their proposal. The only contact has been when I heard they would have representatives at Goulburn Library where, on 17th November, my wife and I went there to discuss their proposal. Their representatives claim it is absolutely safe and there would be no problems – along with various other obvious false claims including a laughable one that Veolia would not make a profit from the incinerator and that Veolia was doing it for our benefit – less pollution of the environment.
- b) Veolia's EIS has been issued with a limited time for the public to make these submissions even though Veolia has had years and their vast resources to develop their EPA. It is difficult for the layperson, such as me, to get through it let alone make sense of all of it, in the available time.
- c) Veolia's EIS is extremely long and complicated and appears to me to be designed to overwhelm the reader, to confuse the reader and to obfuscate the issues that concern us.

2. **I believe the proposed Veolia incinerator would be extremely dangerous to the local environment – including my property – and to every living thing in that environment in that:**

- a) It will emit dangerous, toxic fumes – including toxic heavy metal particulates and persistent organic particulates: dioxins, furens, PBS and PFAS. I first learned of this and the dangers of these incinerators in an article on the NSW IPCN website
<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/project-submissions/2018/04/eastern-creek-energy-from-waste-facility-ssd-6236/20180518t193048/incineration-and-human-health-greenpeace.pdf>
Other dangerous substances named in the article include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polychlorinated naphthalenes, chlorinated benzenes, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), numerous volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and heavy metals including lead, cadmium and mercury.
Given that this information is obtained from a NSW government authority website, I consider it wise of me to believe these incinerators are dangerous to the environment, to my wife and me, to all other people and creatures in the huge area affected.
- b) The effects of these toxic fumes are also detailed in the same article: **“Many of these chemicals are known to be persistent (very resistant to degradation in the environment), bioaccumulative (build up in the tissues of living organisms) and toxic.** These three properties make them arguably the most problematic chemicals to which natural systems can be exposed. **Some** of the emitted chemicals **are carcinogenic** (cancer-causing) and **some are endocrine disruptors.** Others such as

sulphur dioxide (SO²) and nitrogen dioxide (NO²) as well as fine particulate matter, have been associated with adverse impacts on **respiratory** health.”

- c) During the planned lifetime of the incinerator it will produce some 500,000 tons of toxic fly ash and up to 3 million tons of contaminated bottom ash. These hazardous wastes will be stored in the ground near Tarago. (NSW Dep't of Planning Woodlawn ARC: Veolia Woodlawn ARC, Tarago Community communications with Veolia 2022)
- d) Given the above information **I cannot understand the NSW government would ever consider having these EfW incinerators anywhere in the state.**
- e) I am extremely afraid of the fallout destroying our environment and our health. Toxic smoke particles will penetrate our lungs and brains and move into our blood stream and other organs. (Facts about “waste-to-energy” incinerators, GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives), 2018.; Particle Pollution Exposure, United States Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/pmcourse/particle-pollution-exposure)
- f) Veolia has even admitted that its emissions will exceed the NSW governments standards for safety (Veolia Woodlawn ARC website; Tarago Community communications with Veolia, 2022.)
- g) Yet, Veolia also claims this won't happen. Given that it has happened to areas in the vicinity of such incineration in UK and Europe, it can only be taken that it will happen here.
- h) Veolia claims they will have safeguards to prevent this happening. Their representatives tried to convince me the safeguards are 100% safe. Nobody could accept that technology is 100% safe. We have all seen reports of disasters occurring with supposedly “safe” technology eg vast oil spills, gas well blowouts. I, along with all others in the wider community, should not be exposed to any risk with the potential of toxic fumes that may and probably will cause cancers.
- i) Veolia claims that small amounts of these toxins are harmless. We do not want to be exposed to any amount of these toxins.
- j) Toxins will accumulate where they are deposited and will also be carried by surface and ground water to other locations including into Sydney's water supply as this area is in the upper reaches of tributaries to the Nepean River.

3. Widespread objections – non-acceptance of the proposal

I understand that for such a proposal to go ahead, Veolia is supposed to have obtained Community acceptance.

Objections have been made voraciously by:

- a) Communities Against The Tarago Incinerator (CATTI) – this group of extremely concerned residents has been campaigning against the proposal for many months now. Their posts can be seen on Facebook. They have distributed thousands of Leaflets to inform people as to the dangers of the proposed incinerator – this is in strong contrast to Veolia's lack of dissemination of information. The leaflets are well referenced to support CATTI's facts presented. The group has issued press releases, had public meetings and demonstrations, been interviewed by the media.
- b) Tarago And District Progress Association objects to the incinerator proposals.
- c) Goulburn Mulwaree Council has strongly objected to the incinerator proposals (both the previous and current councils) and members of the public, including me, have addressed the council as to their opposition to the incinerator proposals at council meetings.

- d) At the November Council special meeting, the Veolia representative was most unconvincing in his address and in his poor answers to questioning by the Councillors. One spurious claim he seemed to make was there were 4.25 million supporters in Sydney – I think that was based on the circulation of newspapers containing Veolia’s advertisements.
- e) The Member for Hume, Ms Wendy Tuckerman, MP and Minister for Local Government, has stated her strong support of the community and their opposition to the proposed incinerator. This can be seen in her November newsletter to constituents.
- f) The ACT government has banned such incinerators in the ACT and I believe it is going to lodge an objection.
- g) Queanbeyan-Palerang Council strongly objects to the incinerator.
- h) From the above it can easily be seen that Veolia lies in claiming only “some” people object to it. Veolia refuses to accept there is broad non-acceptance to it.

4. A good neighbour?

Good neighbours do nothing to damage their neighbours’ property nor do anything to damage their neighbours’ physical health and mental well being.

- a) Veolia has displayed for some years that it is NOT a good neighbour in that Veolia frequently pollutes the air that people have to breathe with the failures in their Bio-reactor system resulting in a stench that permeates the air for a long distance around depending on the wind directions.
- b) Veolia is ignoring its widespread neighbours’ objections to the proposed garbage incinerator and playing down the opposition to the proposal by diminishing it to “some people”.
- c) The truck movements go from first light to twilight thus disturbing the peace for a long period each day.
- d) Veolia does not care that its neighbours do not want an incinerator to be established here.

5. VEOLIA’s incompetence

- a) During Veolia’s years of operation of the Bio-reactor they repeatedly break the regulations they are supposed to work within. Complaints have been made many hundreds of times about the stench emitted by the Bioreactor. People report on Facebook they vomit because of the stench.
- b) Veolia appears to be incapable of correcting this problem on a permanent basis.
- c) If Veolia can’t correctly operate their Bio-reactor, how would they ever manage to operate the proposed incinerator in a “safe” manner. Any toxic emission is unsafe. Based on their past and present performance with the Bio-reactor, one can only forecast that failures with the even far more dangerous incinerator would occur and possibly or most likely on numerous occasions each year of its life.
- d) Any failure or breakdown will add to the supposedly “safe” levels of toxins permanently emitted thus making the environment increasingly unsafe.
- e) Each failure, each breakdown will add to the accumulation of toxins in the environment and ultimately in our bodies.

- f) Veolia gets fined at times for these failures, but they continue to do the same things. I believe they were fined just recently for a release of wastes that occurred some months ago.

6. Effects on Agriculture and agricultural income, backyard food production and households:

- a) I firmly believe concerned farmers claims and that it is only logical the fallout from the VEOLIA Incinerator will dangerously contaminate the soils and water.
- b) Toxins will accumulate in soils, pastures and, consequently, in crops and livestock. This will endanger sales of the produce – an economic loss – and if sold then they will be poisoning consumers with their produce. Individual farmers and farmers' organisations have expressed their fears in regard to this.
- c) Backyard vegetable and fruit grown will be unsafe to consume due to the toxins.
- d) Eggs and chickens raised in the backyard will be unsafe for consumption.
- e) Our household water supplies of roof run-off stored in water tanks will become unsafe for drinking and other household uses.

None of us should be exposed to these risks and dangers.

7. Effects on health:

- a) The IPCN website article (referred to above) states health issues arising from such incineration: **Experimental data confirm that incinerators release toxic substances and that humans are exposed as a consequence. Studies on workers at incinerator plants, and populations residing near to incinerators, have identified a wide range of associated health impacts... strongly indicative that incinerators are potentially very damaging to human health.**
- b) Children's health would be at great risk due to exposure to toxins from an early age and effectively all their lives if they remain in the area affected.
- c) **Mental health** will also be affected due to the worries that an incinerator will (and then actually does if constructed) affect people's physical health, incomes (especially farm income), real estate values and children's health.
- d) I strongly object to having an incinerator constructed as it will have bad effects on our physical and mental health. Already my wife and I are thinking that we may have to sell the property we love so much and move to a safer location. We should not have to live in a place that will be severely contaminated by a garbage incinerator and nor should we be driven away from our land and home due to the state government's desire to get rid of Sydney's garbage by burning it in our region and Veolia's wish to profit by that.

8. No value in fines, compensation and restorative work.

- a) It seems a pointless exercise to fine a huge international business such as Veolia, as fines it experiences are far too small to have any effect. To have any effect fines would need to be in the millions of dollars. In any case at that stage the damage has already been done. Fines need to be similar to those the EU are introducing to penalise media platforms that disseminate false information i.e. 6% of their gross international revenues.

- b) Financial compensation for environmental damage, health effects and death of residents due to the emissions will never make up for the damage done to the individual, the family and friends of those affected.
- c) If restorative work has to be done, then it means the damage to the environment has been done already. One can well ask how ever could Veolia do restorative work on dozens or hundreds of square kilometres of land affected by its pollution? I consider the answer is that Veolia would not do the necessary work and also would find the task an impossible one.

9. Energy production and consumption

- a) Veolia claims its incinerator would be a “green energy” producer. It cannot be as it will burn plastics and other forms of garbage. It is not “green” in that it is not sustainable and indeed it would reduce the state’s sustainability efforts by burning garbage rather than recycling it. The temperature that the garbage, including plastics, will be burned in the Veolia incinerator is to be 860 C but plastics need to be burned at over 1100 C so they will not produce toxins. Therefore, such an incinerator that operates at the temperature of 850C is entirely unsuitable for the supposed purpose. It is frightening that the NSW government would even consider allowing such an incinerator to be operated anywhere in the state.
- b) It is not energy efficient as Veolia claims it to be. There is data that shows this incineration process produces less energy than it consumes, therefore it is energy inefficient.
- c) Vast amounts of energy will be used in the transportation by rail of garbage from Sydney to terminal at Woodlawn and truck to the incinerator; energy will be consumed in powering the incinerator; energy will be consumed to transport ash from other incinerators to be dumped and stored at Woodlawn as part of Veolia’s plans.
- d) It would be more efficient to continue with the dumping of garbage at Woodlawn and continuing with only the Bioreactor system – that needs to be vastly improved.

10. Veolia’s Penalties

Veolia has broken the regulations and thus broken the law under which it operates on many occasions

As per the extract:

[Energy from waste facility near Canberra meets some local ...
https://canberraweekly.com.au › News › Local](https://canberraweekly.com.au › News › Local)

2 Nov 2022 — The NSW Government has stated that “for some common air ... “Veolia has been issued with **countless fines and warnings over the past decade**, ..

These fines and warnings are obviously no deterrent to Veolia and when one sees a fine such as in the following item, one can deduce that it’s probably cheaper for Veolia to pay these paltry fines than to actually fix the problem permanently. We can only expect the same with an incinerator that will spew out toxic wastes and transport and storage of toxic ash that will contaminate our environment permanently.

[EPA fines Veolia Environmental Services for waste offence
https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au › news › media-releases](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au › news › media-releases)

23 July 2021 — The New South Wales Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has fined Veolia Environmental Services (Australia) Pty Ltd \$15,000 for alleged ...
Missing: ~~times~~ | Must include: [times](#)

11. VEOLIA makes false claims

- a) Veolia claims that accidents will not happen. This is an impossible promise for any business to keep.
- b) Veolia claims their technology will have immediate shut down in the event of incidents so there is no contamination of the environment. They can't do this with their Bioreactor so we can't believe them to be able to do it with an incinerator producing toxic wastes.
- c) Veolia's representatives claimed to me that Veolia wants to build this incinerator even though it will not be profitable. In effect they are acting in a benevolent manner. This is an absurdity. No international business would do this and they haven't been unprofitable anywhere else where they have constructed incinerators. Profit is essential for Veolia as it is with any business.
- d) Veolia claims that only "some people" object to the incinerator proposal. They ignore the extremely strong opposition to it from individuals through to local government and the ACT government.
- e) The Veolia representatives claimed to me that Veolia workers are safe working there and therefore we would be safe. Their workers would probably be supplied with bottled water or equivalent, will not be consuming roofwater nor backyard produce; they will not be living there 24 hours per day every day of their lives; their children and grandchildren will not be living there to be affected by toxic wastes. All this in contrast to all we residents who will live in the huge area affected by Veolia's toxic outputs into the air, onto the soils, surface water and groundwater,
- f) I believe that Veolia Board members do not live in the vicinity of their incinerators. Veolia has not reputed this.

Summation:

I stress that I strongly object to the establishment of the Veolia incinerator in the vicinity of Tarago, part of the Goulburn-Mulwaree LGA.

This incinerator, due to its toxic emissions, will endanger the environment, the health and safety and livelihoods of residents in a huge surrounding area. Not only the current population but the descendants of it will suffer due to the accumulation of toxins in the soils and water of the area. The production and storage of toxic fly ash and toxic bottom ash will also endanger the surface and ground waters of the area and well beyond – even to the Sydney water supply. the incinerator is not at all an efficient producer of energy in that the entire process would consume more energy than it would produce. It is not a "green" energy source and will ultimately destroy resources that could be recycled. This incinerator, if built, would destroy the way of life that we residents have in that we have a strong attachment to our land and appreciate the clean and healthy state of our rural environment.

I find it incredible that the NSW government or any government authority would wish to impose this incinerator upon any person in the state of NSW.

I trust that the Department of Planning and Environment will decide that the proposed incinerator is not safe and is not suitable for our environment; that the DPE will agree with the residents of Tarago and District and all others who object to this proposed incinerator and therefore reject the proposal by Veolia and the NSW government to have this incinerator at the site near Tarago or anywhere else in this region.

Such incinerators are considered by the NSW government as not safe for Sydney so they are not safe for me and my environment nor any other person's environment.

I have not made any reportable donations to any political party.

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