

Submission against Veolia's proposed incinerator at Tarago.

I live near Casino, not far from the Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct, which has been designated as a potential site for a waste-to-energy incinerator.

I strongly object to Veolia's proposed waste-to-energy incinerator at Tarago. I am aghast that the NSW Government is encouraging incinerator proposals in this state.

I have multiple concerns about this enterprise and believe that Veolia's toxic industrial waste incinerator will:

1. Put the health of the community at risk, particularly the developing babies of pregnant or nursing mothers.

It is not possible to filter all the emissions produced by an incinerator. Pollution would include acid gases, toxic heavy metal particulates (mercury, lead cadmium) and persistent organic particulates (dioxins, furans, PCBs, PFAS) The plume plotter at <https://www.notaragoincinerator.com/plume-plotter> demonstrates these will be dispersed over a wide area. The toxins accumulate where they land, on agricultural areas providing fruit, vegetables, meat, wine, dams, roofs that feed into water tanks and water courses that are used for irrigation. They are then transferred to our food and absorbed into the human body where they can lead to decreased lung function, cardiac disease and death. They can also cause birth defects and developmental issues, as well as some cancers. We cannot afford to risk exposing the health of future generations to 'forever chemicals' by allowing the Veolia incinerator proposal to proceed.

2. Endanger the agricultural and tourism industries in the whole region and by extension all other associated industries.

Food contaminated by incinerator toxins can cause cancer, miscarriage, infant deaths, developmental delays, reproductive issues, heart disease and respiratory impairment. The whole area could be stigmatised by this contamination and products could be rejected by national and export markets. This would cause the loss of livelihoods of food producers, all the businesses who supply them and those who are supplied by them. It would also impact on tourism, which is a major employer. The unemployment rate in Goulburn Mulwaree is lower than both the state and national unemployment rates. The Veolia incinerator would destroy the thriving businesses that have been painstakingly built up over many years and cause unemployment rather than enhance employment.

3. Cause environmental disaster for the region, particularly as the water table is so close to the surface.

It is not possible to remediate soil, pasture or water that has been contaminated with dioxins, furans or PFAS chemicals. They continue to accumulate and are there forever, a toxic legacy and an intergenerational environmental burden.

In addition, at a time when it is imperative to reduce emissions and their effects on climate and extreme weather events, this incinerator will contribute to climate change by emitting 140,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases (CO₂) each year. Approving the project would be inconsistent with the NSW government commitment to net zero emissions by 2030.

4. Waste incineration cannot legitimately be included as a component of a circular economy.

How can waste-to-energy possibly be considered part of circular economy, when turning plastic waste into fuel perpetuates the need to use fossil fuels to produce more of that plastic. This is a linear economy, not circular at all. Incineration is not even an efficient way to produce power. An incinerator burning 300,000 tonnes of waste will produce only 30MW of power while a coal plant with equivalent levels of pollution will produce over 800,000 MW.

Incinerators reduce recycling rates by destroying municipal solid waste 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 replace the waste stream of municipal, commercial and industrial waste with highly contaminated ash that will leach toxins into the environment.

5. An incinerator was not approved for Sydney due to the pollution it would cause so why is it a possibility at Tarago?

The NSW Government has banned toxic waste incinerators in Sydney. The risks to human health have not changed since that decision was made in 2018 so why allow an incinerator at Tarago now?