

Wincraden Pastoral
Tarago Farm

Dear Sally Munk

I'm writing to formally object on behalf of Wincraden Pastoral to the Veolia proposal for a Woodlawn Advanced Energy Recovery Centre at Tarago, a waste incinerator that would burn up to approximately 380,000 tonnes of waste annually for the next 25 to 30 years.

I am an owner of Wincraden Pastoral. Our Tarago farm consists of 1800 acres and has consistently delivered premium cattle to market for over a decade. A key input to our cattle business has been the pristine high-quality grass and feed crops grown at our property only 7kms from the proposed incinerator site. Veolia's proposal to build an industrial scale waste incinerator represents an unacceptable risk to Wincraden Pastoral's production capacity and the property value of our Tarago farm. If it is allowed to go ahead, the waste incinerator being proposed could potentially impose significant economic losses on our family farm business. Furthermore, the proposed waste incinerator risks damaging our farm and surrounding property values, as the long-term demand for land in our area will likely decline due to concerns around contamination from the incinerator.

The proposed incinerator has the potential to decimate our farm productive capacity by permanently polluting our soil and water with dangerous toxins such as mercury, lead and persistent environmental pollutants such as dioxins, furans and PCBs. This has the potential to contaminate our grass and feed crops, with our cattle absorbing these toxins from crops and pasture, water and air, leaving our premium beef product unsaleable. Food contaminated by incinerator toxins can cause significant health effects ranging from increased risk of cancer, heart disease and respiratory impairmentⁱ.

I refer you to the Systematic review of the health impacts of waste incineration published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health in 2020 (and compiled by academics from the Australian National University Medical School, the Public Health Association of Australia, and Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australia). This review concluded **"there is insufficient evidence to conclude that any incinerator is safe"** and **"contamination of food and ingestion of pollutants is a significant risk pathway for both nearby and distant residents"**. It also recommends that **incinerators not be located near food production areas** and **"food grown near an incinerator should be avoided"**.

The risks to human health, agricultural production, and the broader environment from the proposed waste incinerator at Tarago are not just theoretical. There are numerous examples across the EU where there has been unintended spills and permanent damage caused to surrounding areas from incinerator contamination. There are towns and areas across Europe where the residents can no longer grow food in their soil, or farm animals for food production, and are advised to not allow their children play in contaminated land caused from similar incinerators to this proposalⁱⁱ.

This proposal represents an unacceptable risk to the health of our local community, ranging from young children attending the local Tarago school, to retired grandparents. The health risks extend far beyond Tarago, however. The proposal represents a serious risk to the health of major population centres in Canberra (around 40kms) Goulbourn (30kms), Queanbeyan, Braidwood, Bungendore, Murrumbateman, Gunning, Marulan, Yass and surrounding developments from toxic air particulate matter falling on these surrounding areas.

The proposal would lock NSW councils potentially into long term supply contracts of waste quotas to supply the waste incinerator for next 25-30 years. This is in direct opposition to ongoing efforts to reduce, recycle and redesign waste streams as local and State governments and industry in Australia begin to work towards creating a circular low waste economy. Importantly, all surrounding councils including Goulbourn-Mulwaree are against this proposal due to the unacceptable risks it presents to our region's people, agricultural industry and environment. The ACT Government banned similar waste to energy incinerators in 2020 due to risks to health, agriculture, and the environment.

The EIS provides no confidence in Veolia's capability to effectively prevent contaminants like nano particulate pollutants that will evade the proposed methods of pollution capture/filters and risk irreversibly polluting our Tarago farm and surrounding region. The EIS provides no detail of an essential system of baseline data collection and ongoing real time monitoring of soil, air and water samples to effectively monitor potential impacts. In addition, the NSW Government does not currently have safety standards for emissions from incinerators during start-up, shut-down and other 'non-standard' operating conditions, during which the proposed incinerator could release significant toxic pollutants into the air at these times, permanently polluting Wincraden Pastoral's Tarago farm and surrounding Canberra region.

Furthermore, the waste incinerator proposal represents a risk that could pollute Sydney's water supply from Veolia's proposal to bury onsite millions of tons of toxic ash over the next 30 years. The proposal's EIS fails to adequately outline how the proposed method of burying this toxic waste mixed with cement will not leach into Tarago ground water, that eventually flows downstream via creeks and rivers into Sydney's water supply. Veolia has a poor track record, with recent spills from the current waste centre leading to pollutants entering the local creek. To protect Sydney's future water supply, this proposal cannot be allowed to go ahead.

It's unacceptable for the NSW Government to impose this burden on Tarago and surrounding Canberra region if similar waste incineration proposals have previously been knocked back to protect Sydney residents. In 2018, a waste incinerator classified as state significant development was proposed for Eastern Creek in Western Sydney, with NSW EPA opposed. This was rejected by Planning NSW's Independent Planning Panel due to it being not in the public interest due to "uncertainty" over the project's risks to human health, and impact on air and water quality. In 2021, I understand a proposal for a high temperature incineration project at Matraville in Sydney was withdrawn following similar concerns to those applicable to the rejected Eastern Creek project. On the same grounds the NSW

Government cannot allow this proposal to go ahead, as the risks to key agriculture producers, and health of major populations in the effected Canberra region is too high.

Regards,

Winston Nash
Wincraden Pastoral

ⁱ [The health impacts of waste incineration: a systematic review](#), Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 2020 vol. 44 no. 1 - Peter W. Tait, James Brew, Angelina Che, et al.}

ⁱⁱ Hidden Emissions: A story from the Netherlands (Case Study), ToxicoWatch and Zero Waste Europe, 2018.