



A Wake-Up Call for Tarago's Future! NSW Government and Veolia selling us out

Thank you to everyone who made a submission to the NSW Environment Protection Agency (EPA) waste incinerator framework review (Ref 1). Speaking up and making our voice heard is more important than ever as the NSW Government and Veolia double down on their attempts to sell out our community so that Sydney doesn't have to deal with the waste they produce.

In mid-May, the EPA released another plan for consultation - the Draft NSW Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan (Ref 2) demonstrating the NSW Government's clear intention to continue pushing waste incineration regardless of impacts or opposition. The Plan begins with a message from the NSW Environment Minister, who successfully lobbied against having an incinerator in her own Sydney electorate, but now claims waste incinerators need to be built in places like Tarago and planning processes weakened to ensure houses and businesses in Sydney "are still able to have their red-lid bins collected".

Particularly galling is the section which says "we have heard your calls for action". The problem though is that the only voices the Government is listening to is the waste industry and those on its payroll. A good example of this is EMM Consulting - the claimed "independent experts" who Veolia paid to write their incinerator Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) who are now lobbying the NSW Government to reduce emission and feedstock standards, ignore local communities, and allow incinerators to be built everywhere in NSW (Ref 3). Meanwhile the voices of local communities such as ours, health and environmental experts, the agricultural and viticultural industry and others continue to be ignored.

I encourage you to read this draft plan and provide your feedback by 25th June - <https://yoursay.epa.nsw.gov.au/draft-nsw-waste-and-circular-infrastructure-plan>. You may want to question their plans to have the EPA - the environmental regulator meant to police the waste industry - and other government agencies work closely with companies like Veolia to "streamline" the approvals process to expand their operations and secure their investments in things like incinerators. This would ensure their applications get across the line and deliver profits to their shareholders for decades to come, while the source of Sydney's waste problem isn't addressed and our regional environment and local communities bear the consequences.

I also encourage you to consider joining the protest against waste incineration outside the NSW Parliament planned for Wednesday 25th June 10:30am - 12:30pm (<https://allevents.in/sydney/no-incinerators-in-industry-or-anywhere-in-nsw/200028106713127>).

Water contamination at Woodlawn

In late April, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) issued a media release reporting test results identifying excessive levels of contaminants and PFAS in creeks surrounding Veolia's existing Woodlawn landfill operations in Tarago (Ref 4). Of real concern for the community was that the results exceeded guidelines for livestock and freshwater species, with Veolia's current operations called out as the potential source given the chemicals identified are commonly found in landfills.

More concerning is that it has taken Veolia and the EPA six months to make these results public! The tests and a Veolia hydrogeological risk assessment highlighting risks of leachate dam water seepage were completed in October 2024. Despite this there has been no mention of the results in their Tarago Times articles, on their website, at their pop up information stalls, or even at the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) until April when the EPA reported on it. Veolia finally placed the report on their website hidden under "Other Reports" just before the EPA media release (Ref 5), but attached a cover letter which tries to blame any contamination on the previous Woodlawn mine from over thirty years ago. This despite the EPA linking the chemicals found to landfills (Ref 4).

Sound familiar? we've reported numerous examples of similar behaviour from Veolia - failing to inform the community of environmental risks and pollution, fines and regulatory breaches, lies about self-reporting of non-compliance and lies about EPA risk assessment of their environmental management, along with attempts to withhold information from the community under freedom of information processes.

This latest issue reinforces what we've been saying for years - Veolia's track record demonstrates they break the rules, pollute the environment, hide information from the community and fail to take responsibility. All while making significant profits for their shareholders.

So what about an incinerator then? In addition to their current operations, Veolia wants to burn 320,000 tonnes of Sydney's waste each year in Tarago. It will spread emissions throughout the surrounding region including acid gases, heavy metal particulates (mercury, lead cadmium) and persistent organic pollutants (dioxins, furans, PCBs and PFAS). Exposure to this pollution can cause illness and death from respiratory problems (asthma, lung disease, breathing difficulties), strokes, cancer, heart disease, heart attack and more. The toxins also settle on the surrounding environment contaminating water and soil, entering the human food chain through food produced nearby (Ref 6, 7, 8).

But it doesn't end there - the process will also generate 15,000 tonnes of highly concentrated toxic 'fly ash' each year (Ref 9) full of dioxins, furans, PFAS, lead, mercury and arsenic (Ref 10) which Veolia propose to dispose of in the Woodlawn landfill using stabilisation methods untested in Australia.

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These most recent water contamination developments and the NSW Government's obsession with incinerators should serve as a wake-up call to us all. We are already experiencing harm to our health and environment from multiple existing state significant developments and it is clear EPA license conditions and rules do nothing to protect us.

Adding a toxic incinerator to the mix is completely irresponsible and constitutes an unacceptable cumulative impact to the region's health and environment. It must be stopped now - we deserve the same rights and protection to a clean environment as those in Sydney where the waste will come from!

KEEP FOLLOWING US ON FACEBOOK AND THE WEB:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080002033843>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/491803828839813>
www.notaragoincinerator.com

You can also help contribute to our advocacy efforts via our GoFundMe page - <https://www.gofundme.com/f/no-toxic-waste-incinerator-for-tarago>

And continue reporting every time you smell Veolia's stench in Tarago to the NSW EPA on 131 555 or info@epa.nsw.gov.au.

*Rod Thiele
President,*

Communities Against The Tarago Incinerator (CATTI) Inc

REFERENCES

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