

Not waste-to-energy but waste incineration and distribution

VAIA respectfully asks Committee Members to consider the reality of the proposed infrastructure. Waste does not disappear and energy is not the only output. Briefly, incinerated household rubbish forms carbon dioxide (3kg per kg of plastic), water vapour, high-toxicity solid waste residue, heat (20% of which converts to electricity), plus dioxins and fine carbon particles. (<https://zerowasteaustralia.org/incineration/>)

Only the electricity and high-grade residue will be contained and controlled. Most of the heat, carbon dioxide, fine carbon particles and dioxins will be released to the air above.

We are discussing and you are deciding on waste incineration and distribution plants.

Geographic distribution of incinerator pollution and harms

Because the waste incineration and distribution plants would surround Melbourne, and the Wollert site is 5km from Yan Yean Reservoir, there is no part of Victoria and no part of the community that will be safe. Placement of plants in safe seats will not prevent dioxin pollution and cancer being distributed via the food chain, as was shown in [France](#). The [Public Health Association](#) of Australia states that distance from incinerators will not protect citizens.

Waste incineration is linear a process, at odds with current State policy

The [European Commission](#) found that waste incineration prevents the pursuit circular economy and waste hierarchy principles. Approval and implementation of industrial-scale waste incineration will require State Government to reverse our current policy regarding waste hierarchy and circular economy. This is incompatible with our community. Victorians want responsible waste management, as shown by the recent success of our container deposit scheme. Solutions like household waste separation, producer responsibility and stewardship, biodigester plants, [tax](#) and [more](#) can be massively expanded to prevent waste.

Waste Incinerators are a threat to public health

Burning plastics with chloride (e.g. nappies, pet refuse) always generates dioxins, which are [persistent organic pollutants](#) causing cancer. Waste incinerators damage [human health](#). Small [carbon particles](#) (2.5 microns) emitted by waste incinerators enter cause cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, miscarriage and early death, currently irreversible conditions.

Unwanted solid residues, including stranded assets

Unlike landfill, recycling, advanced sorting, taxation and packaging control, waste incineration generates highly hazardous waste, demonstrated in [Europe](#). In the current Victorian scenario, burning 2.35 million tonnes of non-toxic household waste will produce around 20% by weight of toxic solid waste requiring high-level disposal.

A further reason the Committee should reject waste incinerators is the high likelihood of this infrastructure becoming [stranded assets](#), as happened in Europe.

Waste incinerators will not provide cheap household electricity

Sadly, waste incineration and distribution plants will not add meaningfully to the State's electricity supply, because we already make excess unused electricity. The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) states that 35-65% of solar power exported to the grid in Victoria is wasted or "[curtailed](#)", because electricity demand is fully satisfied and/or the grid distribution network is incapable of absorbing these volumes. The argument that thousands of homes need electricity from burnt rubbish is not valid. Available price and pollution comparisons show waste-generated electricity is worse than [coal](#).

Waste Incinerators are a climate bomb

Unlike the alternatives, waste incinerators immediately generate carbon dioxide at a rate of 3kg per kg of plastic burnt. Human-induced climate change arises from carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels. The [first](#) National Climate Risk Assessment outlines the threat posed to health, economy, roads and infrastructure, food production at 3 levels of climate warming. Increased carbon dioxide and heat pollution from incinerating waste can only accelerate air and ocean warming and increase these harms. The removal of livelihoods from agriculture and horticulture will be the first of many horrifying consequences of climate change. VAIA urge the Committee to seriously consider the ramifications of a worsening climate.

Social licence and regulatory framework

With the upcoming closure of Recycling Victoria, VAIA is not well positioned to comment on the regulation of waste incineration and distribution plants. A series of scandalous toxic stockpile fires and asbestos dumping undermine confidence in the State's capacity to regulate the safety of huge new plants.

In October 2025 the Head of Recycling Victoria, Tony Circelli told the National Waste Expo in Melbourne that the risks to be managed were community fear and expectation rather than human health, climate, land, air or water. Approaching the new, massive enterprise as a public relations exercise rather than genuine physical risk management does not inspire trust.

[Community consultation](#) showed that people did not welcome waste incineration and distribution plants, yet the cap licenses have been massively expanded to 2.35 million tonnes per year. This contrast between the lack of social license and the enthusiasm of State Government is a gap that should be thoroughly addressed by this Committee.

According to the Federal Government, waste incinerators do not produce [renewable](#) energy. The reverse is true in Victoria, where the definition of circular economy embraces include burnt disposable coffee cups, dog droppings, and construction [waste](#).

Conclusion

Hazardous, expensive, polluting waste incineration and distribution plants have no social license in Victoria and are being progressively closed in the [USA](#) (where no new incinerator has been built since 1995). VAIA urges the Committee to reject “waste-to-energy” infrastructure plans in favour of more benign strategies.

The real demonstrated risks of damage to climate, water, human and animal health, Victoria’s reputation and capacity for food and wine production far outweigh the benefits of waste incineration and distribution.