

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### The Development and Expansion of Waste-to-Energy (WtE) Infrastructure in Victoria

Sunbury – Thursday 7 May 2026

#### MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair

Richard Welch – Deputy Chair

John Berger

Gaelle Broad

Katherine Copsey

Moira Deeming

Tom McIntosh

Evan Mulholland

Sonja Terpstra

**WITNESSES**

Pat Carmody, Craiglee Vineyard;

Alan McKenzie, Owner, McKenzie Water; and

Rodney Cummings.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the Development and Expansion of Waste-to-Energy Infrastructure in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast or observing from the public gallery.

For anyone who has just come into the public gallery, you are more than welcome to be here. We are thrilled to have such a big crowd – we do not normally get that. This is considered a formal proceeding of the Parliament, so if there are any disruptions from the gallery, it could force a close-down of the hearing, and we would like to avoid that happening.

I will now call on committee members to introduce themselves, starting with Mr Ettershank.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Hi. I am David Ettershank, Western Metropolitan Region.

**The CHAIR:** Georgie Purcell, Northern Victoria Region.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Hi. I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

**Tom McINTOSH:** Tom McIntosh, Eastern Victoria Region.

**The CHAIR:** We will be joined by Dr Mansfield at some point throughout this hearing. She has just had to duck out quickly.

Thank you so much for appearing before us today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during the hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing, and then transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, could you all please state your full name and your role or organisation you are appearing on behalf of. We will start down here with Rodney.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** Rodney Cummings, and I am a beekeeper.

**The CHAIR:** Cool.

**Pat CARMODY:** Patrick Carmody. I am a winemaker.

**Alan McKENZIE:** Alan McKenzie. I run a business, McKenzie Water, but I also, more importantly, farm across the road on the south side, of Hi-Quality.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thank you so much. We now welcome your opening comments but ask they are kept to around 15 minutes as a group to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** I am 65 years old. I was a postal delivery officer for 22 years, but now I am retired. I live in Summerhill Road, Wollert, and that is where Cleanaway are planning to build an incinerator. I am 4 kilometres just down the road. I am a registered beekeeper; I brought some honey with me too. I fear that the pollution from the incinerator, the smoke and so forth, will contaminate the honey. No-one will want to buy it or use it. Also, bees travel 5 kilometres, so they will be visiting all the flowers within the area, and where the incinerator is would be very bad for them. The bees are having a lot of trouble at the moment with the varroa virus and probably climate change, I suppose. I have got several chickens too. Apparently in Paris you cannot eat the eggs because of the contamination from the incinerator there, so eggs would probably be no good either. I did not bring any eggs. Also, with my drinking water, I do not have mains water there and I am on tank water; I brought some tank water. It is beautiful and fresh. It came last night anyway in the rain. Imagine all the smoke, all the pollution coming my way, all of that going onto the roof of the house and then into the tank, and then I drink it. You cannot filter it out. It is harmful as far as I am concerned.

I found out about this proposal on the internet. I did not get any other notification. Cleanaway said that they notified everyone in the street, but I did not get anything. So I went to their information centre in Craigieburn, which is about 20 kilometres from my house. There were no neighbours there. They did not know about it at the time. This was a few years back now. I had several questions for them, mainly about the smoke pollution. I did not know anything about it then, except I had read some of their paperwork that they had online. I did not get any proper answers from them, except that the only thing coming out of the smokestack will be fresh air and steam. I thought, 'That's not right.' You are burning plastic, cardboard, general rubbish. It is not going to be fresh air. After you burn all the rubbish, you get the bottom ash, the fly ash, which I think is the toxic residue. That will be transported past my house, because there are only two ways. It will be the closest way to get to the Wollert tip if that is where they are going to put it. Imagine all the ash and stuff coming off the trucks into my property.

Everything in the rubbish bin will be burnt. They are not going to sort it. They are not going to go through it. They are just going to tip it in the rubbish truck and then burn it. I do not think that is the right thing to do. I think it should be sorted first. I think they should take it to a centre, all the plastics should be taken out, all the cardboard, that sort of thing. But that is actually what they want because that is what burns. The food scraps and stuff should not actually be burnt. Also, they are going to be burning building materials and construction stuff, so that is going to contain asbestos, and you cannot filter out the asbestos either. I am just wondering when they burn that if asbestos is going to be drifting over my house. As it turns out, my mother died from asbestosis, so I have got concerns there too.

Something they do not talk about is that they have to burn all this material at 800 degrees and they are going to inject it with diesel. How can that be environmentally good for you? And how much diesel are they going to put in, because I asked them and they would not tell me. They did not know. I think it depends on how much moisture is in the rubbish and how much plastic, because the plastic burns very well. I also asked Cleanaway if they are going to offer any compensation to people like me, the local residents, if they were to develop lung conditions or any sort of thing like that? But no, they are not, so you are on your own really. Another concern I had was that if they have an accident or an explosion – just down the road I will see the sky lighting up – they will contact me and say, 'Oh, we've just had an accident and there is pollution heading your way.' But no, they do not contact you at all. You will find out in about a year, maybe two, because that is what has happened in England. Apparently they had a bit of an accident there and two years later they informed all the residents.

Landfill space is not running out. Everyone says to me, 'Oh, we're going to run out of landfill.' But that is not true. Australia has got plenty of space and plenty of quarries. Wollert tip has got room for another 80 to 100 years, so there is no need for an incinerator right at the moment. I think repair, reuse, recycle should be encouraged rather than just burning everything. I tried to find out more and talk to a few politicians. Lily D'Ambrosio said she is against incineration in Wollert. As far as I know, she introduced it. Andrew Giles is the federal minister. He is against incineration. The Whittlesea council tell me they are against incineration. Everyone says they do not want it, but it is still going ahead, apparently.

No incinerators are permitted in Canberra. That is terrific, isn't it? Maybe we will all move up there. No incinerators are permitted in Sydney. Well, good on them there because they put a stop to it. There are no incinerators in Toorak, Brighton or Sandringham because that is where the people from Cleanaway live. Obviously they do not want it in their backyard, and no-one else wants it in their backyard either. Thank you.

**Pat CARMODY:** I run Craiglee Vineyard, which is just down the road from here, and I have done it for 50 years this year. We are in the Langtons classification of Australian classified wines for our shiraz being supposedly the best in Australia. The vineyard was originally planted in 1863 and made wine until the late 1920s, which postdates the Yarra Valley, which had ceased it in 1920. In 1972 a whole lot of bottles from 1872 were opened – it was probably the oldest table wine ever drunk out of Victoria – and found to be sound. As someone earlier said, John Brown found his way out the day after the dinner and suggested that any site in the world that could produce a wine that lasts 100 years was worthy of being replanted. It is a significant site in terms of wine production in Victoria.

I am frightened by this proposal. I have a perennial crop that is susceptible to things like phenoxy herbicides that are around the place, 2,4-Ds, and when I read that dioxins and things that are coming out of incinerators are potentially a source of those sorts of things, I get very scared by that sort of stuff. These things seem to be produced under suboptimal conditions in the incinerators – i.e., at start up, shut down or during breakdowns. I do not care what operators say. There is potentially production of these chemicals coming out of a stack at 60 metres high. HiQ say they have got a 1.3 k's buffer zone, which they do not own. There are significant amounts of it that they do not own. They are taking someone else's land, and I will talk about the EPA and their behaviour with buffer zones in a little while. My vines are very susceptible to those sorts of chemicals, causing abnormal growth and causing problems, potentially longevity of the vineyard. Equally as well, if there is smoke coming out, it could be picked up by the leaves, as bushfires can do, and then converted into smoke taint problems in the grapes that I have.

I do not think they know where the air is going to go when it comes out of a 60-metre stack. They can use weather plumes and they can talk a lot about it, but I do not believe they know. I will give you an example of what has happened. In 2024 we were frosted, in October, from a frost that came from the north, so we lost a significant amount of our crop that year. On 28 October 2025 again we got frosted, but this time it came up the valley. If stuff is coming out of a stack, no-one knows where it is going to go. There is absolutely no way of them guaranteeing, with air currents and temperature inversion and air inversion layers, where that is going to go. As ToxicoWatch found, and everyone has talked about so far – I have listened to that – it was not the regulator that found that. It was ToxicoWatch – from someone else testing soil and testing eggs in Paris and other places. The regulator, as in, I assume, the equivalent of the EPA, follows along behind. They did not find it. They did not do it. They did not regulate it. The proponent is saying they will match EU standards. Is that going to be the same standard as the French one is working on, at about 0.1 nanograms, or is it going to be what is in the Netherlands, 0.01? The EU mandated that only 12 hours testing each year is done by the regulator and only on pre-notified conditions and optimal conditions. There is no continuous monitoring, I assume. We have not heard from these people as to what they are going to do.

In finishing up, I have to have on my label things like pregnancy warnings and 'contains sulphites' and 'may contain egg' or 'may contain milk'. Am I supposed to have on my label 'may contain dioxins or PFAS' or something? Is this a sensible thing to be considering? I do not think that would really help my brand, I am sorry to say. I have had some dealings with the EPA and the department of many name changes. I much preferred DSE when it was called DSE rather than this other one, because at least you knew at 4 o'clock on a Friday afternoon it was the department of smoking embers, and by 5 o'clock, when they had all gone home, it was the department of scorched earth. We were well aware of that. When I read what HiQ said it was going to do, it sounded eerily similar to what I had to deal with a good number of years ago, which was the local sewage farm, which is just around the corner from me – again with the EPA. They said, in describing this plant, that it was going to be the best plant in the Southern Hemisphere, using Swedish technology. They put it on a 110-acre site, and then in 1990 they walked away from that commitment, that it was not appropriate. The EPA came in and their response was – this is the environmental regulator that said no odours were to escape the boundary – 'We're going to endorse a buffer zone starting from the boundary of the property.' This was a 110-acre site, and they sought to sterilise about 500 acres around it, not once enforcing the licence that the plant had. I went to Sydney at the same time – I was selling wine in Sydney – and I went and saw a couple of plants, which were the same size as this plant, sitting on 10 acres with scrubbers in place to control any odours and sludge et cetera moved offsite. And what were we doing in Victoria? You were taking 110 acres, where there should not have been any issues, and trying to sterilise 500 acres around it. That is pretty primitive, I would have thought.

It went on for four years of my life. It turned me from being dark-haired to grey-haired, dealing with what a friend of mine who is in the legal business called the environmental pollution authority. If they had had their way, we would have 10 k's of buffer zones around every site that was licensed, and then they would have had

no issues. It went on, and the Ombudsman got involved and finally decided that the people at the top of this tree, both in the EPA and in the water board, were criminally negligent. Robert Maclellan, who was the minister at the time, stopped them from putting in a buffer zone. Would Minister D'Ambrosio meet with someone and consider that, or is that suddenly no longer an acceptable practice to talk to members of the public? No answer – goodness me. Equally as well, there were no penalties associated with this for anyone or the costs associated with what we had to deal with. It probably cost me about \$100,000. That sort of stuff offends me mightily. If they are the regulator of this sort of thing, then they should be thrown out, because they are incapable of managing anything.

I will try and lighten it a little bit. We also have had to deal with, as I said, the department of many name changes with the expanded urban growth boundary, because I am just down the road. DELWP did not really want development to occur was my impression after John Brumby expanded the urban growth boundary dramatically. What DELWP came up with was that there should be a frog habitat along the creek. They wanted to grab the land along the creeks. We happened to get hooked up in it. We are not a developer; I am a farm. DELWP had no scientific basis as to whether there are frogs there. They could be there. They put our place in, including heritage houses, heritage wineries et cetera. My wife, sitting up the back of the room, will be appalled when I say this, but she asked a couple of the DELWP people: 'Do we leave the doors open in the houses, and do they want single beds or double beds?' DELWP seemed to think we were being a bit flippant. I cannot understand how that occurred. Equally as well – she is a biologist by trade – she asked the question of DELWP: 'Show us your modelling and show us the evidence that you have got the frog.' They were unable to do that. She gave them an example of 'Let's think of any species that we can find.' These people were very interested in that. She said, 'There could still be diprotodon there. The last one was seen 27,000 years ago, but they could still be there.' They sterilised most of my place associated with levies, and if I apply for any sort of building on the site, I am supposed to transfer the land to these people for nothing.

I have got two organisations in the government who have been listed by Josh Bull and his office as being responsible for the introduction of this incinerator down the road, people that I would not allow to pick grapes for me, they are that incompetent. I think this proposal and its potential contamination of soil, contamination of water and contamination of people – young families in this area having to tolerate something like this being imposed on them – with the regulators seemingly, to me, incapable of managing anything is offensive. I reject that it should be planted in this community. Thank you.

**David ETTERS**HANK: Good on you.

**Alan McKENZIE**: I didn't know I had to follow Pat. It is always good to be on a panel with Pat. He was very comprehensive and from the heart too, and it is fact. Alan McKenzie is my name. Our family farm is across the road from Hi-Quality. They have consulted us about the erection of this waste-to-energy power plant. Right from the beginning – and I should say I am a civil engineer – I was concerned about emissions coming out of this facility, and I still am concerned, more than concerned. I am concerned because the EPA are going to be the controlling body and the people who will look after that facility to see that it is complying with the rules and regulations that have been set. First of all, they will set the rules and regulations. Secondly, they will police the rules and regulations.

I will give you a couple of examples from our point of view: across the road from, not Hi-Quality this time, but the next one down, which is now known as ARC or the old BTQ site. If you had come up Sunbury Road, you would have seen it. It is known as Mount Bulla to the people that live in the area. They have over the years run a very shoddy outfit there, which the EPA have tried to control, and it has been beyond the EPA's control. Probably going back about 15 years ago, for those people who know about raising cattle, with the NVDs, we finished up with ham, cheese, salami, chicken and a few other things in our cattle troughs. When I reported it to the EPA, the EPA pooh-poohed it and said I had probably put it there. One EPA bloke had the audacity to tell me that I was a poor farmer because I did not check the cattle troughs every day to make sure I did not have cheese, salami, chicken and probably beef in the cattle troughs, something that we should not have to check for. It came out of that tip across the road at BTQ, at that stage. The crows were bringing it out, sitting on the edge of the trough to have a drink and dropping it in the water. That finished up with the department of ag in Canberra coming down to look as well. No-one could offer us any advice. Suffice to say, though, the EPA wiped their hands of the incident completely.

Travel forward to the existing owner of what is ARC, the same site now. You would have seen a whole lot of stuff I would regard as a shit dumped up on top of the site there, on the northern end of it. That is actually tip material that has been dug out of a cell. They have dug a cell out the back. That was supposed to go back in, I have got to say, probably three years ago now. It should have been all back in the site. Currently the EPA are considering a permit for a soil-washing facility on top of that. Rather than getting them to dump it back in the site and then do their soil washing, they are applying to set up a soil-washing facility on top of that previously dug out material. That dug out material should have been back in the cell and dealt with and the site cleaned up. It is an absolute disgrace. I have had many arguments with the EPA over this. They have not provided me a satisfactory answer at all, and I am led to believe that the EPA are totally incompetent. The officers I have dealt with have been shoddy to say the best, have had no expertise to say the best of them. They are hopeless. Anybody in the state of Victoria that puts the EPA up on a pedestal needs to go away and have a good, hard look at themself. I recently got a survey from the EPA as to what I thought of them. They finished up with either 0 or 1 – I think I could not go any lower than 1 – on every single question, and that is what they deserved. I do not believe they are qualified or have the expertise to monitor this sort of site or set the conditions.

We graze cattle across the road from that site, and I am concerned about what the cattle are going to eat. We also grow crops. We grow canola, which is for human consumption, and the wheat is now for animal consumption. You have got to ask the question. We have heard here today from other people talking about what the experiences are in Europe, I think we have got some fairly good evidence to suggest that it should not be.

I suppose the other question, in finishing off – and this is a very emotive question, and I will be a bit controversial here – is what influence does this government that we have got under Jacinta Allan have over forcing things on community? I come from the farming community. I am watching what is happening out with the powerlines in the west of the state and in the north of the state. I am seeing the way that the farming community are being treated. Our place has been specifically left out of subdivision, and I suspect it is left out of subdivision for these sorts of uses where they will say to us, ‘Well, sorry, you are going to wear a energy-to-waste generator, and so what if it puts pollutes your pasture or your crops. It’s not our responsibility’ – as the EPA have already said to me about the contamination of the troughs. I think it is about time that we had a government that started to listen to some rural people. Your party, and you have mentioned Josh already as being the one of the ones that has been staunch in opposing this facility. He is only a recent comer to that equation. Before that, he would not even entertain any discussion about it and said, ‘Oh well, in time we will come to make our decision on it.’ I suggest you go away and have a good talk to him and see when he did come out publicly and support the community on it. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Thank you for your submissions. I would just like to note before we move into questions that I understand everyone is very passionate about this topic. Mr McIntosh is here as a committee member, and representing the government of course, but if questions or comments could be directed at the committee rather than individual members. We have had a day that has run smoothly and respectfully so far, and I would really love for it to end that way. I just want to say now that I am going to have to take off in around 15 minutes, just in case anyone sees me running out, and Mr McIntosh will be taking the chair for the final session. Submissions went longer than usual, and I did not want to interrupt anyone’s personal stories because they are very important, but it will limit questioning time, so we will have about 4 minutes each. I would just also like to note that Mr Welch has joined, but he is having audio difficulties so he is listening. He will submit questions on notice if he has any. All right. Thank you. We will start with Mr McIntosh.

**Tom McINTOSH:** I grew up on a farm and I grew up with a variety of needs of a broad community. There were transmission lines on the neighbouring farm. I represent Eastern Victoria, where we have had towns flooded to create coal pits and transmission lines all across the way, as there are in much of suburban Victoria. That is a different point. I just want to pull you up on that. Government is about dealing with the needs of the entire state and balancing those needs across communities that have different opinions, different political perspectives. But the great thing about our democracy is we can sit in a room like this and we can discuss and hear what community feel, we can hear scientific evidence and we can draw conclusions that will be tabled in a report, so I just wanted to address that.

Thank you all for making your contributions. I think particularly hearing for myself, Rodney, the honey side of things. I was just out with honey producers in far East Gippsland about two weeks ago, and the challenges are immense. Sorry to veer off course, but I want to acknowledge you at the moment because there would be

additional weights on your mind in the honey industry. I would just like to ask any of you who would like to comment, and I have asked various people that have come and presented today: what you would put to the committee – I mean, I hear quite clearly your position is no to waste-to-energy facility here in this community. Is there anything you would like to add? Rodney, I think you made a comment before about the 80 to 100 years of landfill being available. Is there anything else any of you would like to comment about other alternatives for waste management broadly in the region?

**Alan McKENZIE:** I will have a go at that. The waste management in Victoria has revolved around hard rock quarries. At Oaklands Junction we have got a massive hard rock quarry which eventually may finish up as a waste facility. Even Hi-Quality where they are, they have been building cells and they are currently taking domestic garbage as well to bury. If you are going to burn it, you need to make sure that it is going to be 120 per cent safe, and what you have heard today, whether it is DEECA or the EPA, would lead anybody to believe that we are not capable of making sure that it is 120 per cent safe. I think we are only making sure that it is about 60 per cent safe, and the rest is good luck.

**Tom McINTOSH:** As I said, I understand all of you are put in the position, if I understand correctly, that you do not want the waste-to-energy facility here in this community. Is there anything else any of you would like to add about the way we deal with waste broadly in Victoria and how we manage that waste? Are there any recommendations you can take to the committee? You do not have to, just if you would like to.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** They should concentrate more on recycling and sorting. I know we have got four rubbish bins: one for glass and so forth. But it should not be just tipped into a hole or sent to an incinerator. It has to be dealt with in a location and has to be sorted, I think.

**Tom McINTOSH:** Yes. I will just leave a comment. For others who remember as we removed straws out of takeaway, as we removed plastic bags, there were many people in the community who accused government of stepping into people's rights, so it is not without its challenges. But as I said before, I completely agree with you. I will leave my comments there. Thank you.

**Pat CARMODY:** There are obviously issues with packaging. As people said earlier, veggies and everything seem to be shrink-wrapped. Is that the big change, saying that is what has got to happen rather than loose-packing? Are they leading that charge that they expect everything to be shrink-wrapped and packaged up so that they can put a barcode on it or something? Is this what the big Coles and Woolies expect?

**Tom McINTOSH:** I do not know; it is not my area of expertise. But I believe there have been looks federally at packaging expectations. I think I read somewhere in recent months, unrelated to this, about expectations and works being done and companies are reducing, but we need to reduce more quickly. Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr McIntosh. We will go to Ms Broad.

**Gaëlle BROAD:** Thank you very much. I have got a couple of questions. Alan, you mentioned that there had been some consultation, I think, with HiQ. I am interested in what information you received. Also, Rodney, I think you mentioned asbestos and other items would go in. Have you had any advice or information about – is there a sorting process before?

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** No, no sorting.

**Alan McKENZIE:** No sorting process.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** Straight in.

**Alan McKENZIE:** What we were told was that the trucks would back up, tip into a hopper and the hopper would feed into the furnace. I have got concerns over what goes in, knowing full well that if you do not get the right temperatures, you are going to have something come out the stack that is not right.

**Gaëlle BROAD:** Where did that information ...

**Alan McKENZIE:** It came from Hi-Quality.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Okay. Was that the online meeting, or have you had other written materials from them?

**Alan McKENZIE:** Online.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Just online.

**Alan McKENZIE:** Yes, online.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Is that what you engaged with as well, Rodney?

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** Yes. They said it was going straight into the incinerator, they were not going to sort it at all.

**Gaelle BROAD:** If this goes ahead, what impact would it have on your business and on your own personal families?

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** We recently had an illegal tip site just down the road too, which was right next door to where the incinerator is going to go. Every day, seven days a week, there were trucks going past with concrete and building waste and so forth. I expect that would be the same when the incinerator is there, except it would be legal. I am doing the housework, and all the furniture is covered in dust. I can smell the fumes from the diesel trucks. I expect that will be the same when they build it.

**Gaelle BROAD:** Would you still be able to operate your business with the honey?

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** I do not think anyone would want to buy honey with contamination in it. No.

**Gaelle BROAD:** What are your thoughts?

**Pat CARMODY:** I am not convinced. If I have got contamination of the fruit, the soil or things like that, as I said, suddenly you might have the EPA coming, 'Oh, we're going to test your fruit,' and then it is condemned. Is there any compensation associated with that? There does not seem to be anything that says these people are accountable. There seems to be little or no sympathy. As I said, things like buffer zones are arbitrary. Instead I would like to see EPA licences. It is too easy to put things like buffer zones in. Where is the licence condition that says, 'Okay, next year it's 400 instead of 500. The year after it's 300'? The people are basically acquiring someone else's land for their own use. They are not paying for it. The EPA should be saying, 'You've got to improve your processes.'

With the inquiries et cetera, start to spend some money to reduce the impact on businesses next door. It is not your land. That is what we found with the sewage authority. Robert Maclellan said, 'It's not for the next-door neighbour to provide for the community.' The organisation has to say to the community 'We've stuffed up' and be held accountable for that – not somebody else, not a small farmer or landholder or whoever it happens to be. That tip down the road was supposed to be for inert materials. How does cheese finish up there? It was probably coming from the airport and being dumped there. It is supposed to be buried under 2 metres of soil instead of being burnt under the West Gate Bridge. What happens if we get mad cow disease or something? Who is going to be held accountable? Is it going to be the EPA or the tip site?

**Alan McKENZIE:** Just a point of clarification, our family property has been there for 95 years. We have planning overlays coming from Hi-Quality. We have planning overlays coming from ARC. We have powerlines coming from Yallourn to Sydenham, and we have a gas main which has recently gone through. So I think I am amply qualified to comment on what I have commented on today without any retractions.

With this sort of facility and you are running cattle, when do we really know that we have got some sort of contamination? When do we know that we have got contamination in a canola crop or a wheat crop? They are the sorts of questions that need to be asked, because we are not going to know until someone writes to us and says, 'Every animal has got an ID tag in its ear, and we've just killed one at an abattoir. We've deduced or we've come to the conclusion that it's contaminated with something. We don't know where it's come from, but it's in your meat.' Where do we go then? Because I am sure that the proponents – probably not Hi-Quality, but the EPA will wipe their hands of it, like they have already on the two occasions I have had to deal with them. They have been atrocious.

**Gaëlle BROAD:** Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Ms Broad. We will go to Mr Ettershank.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your submissions today. It has been heartfelt and really, really strong. Rodney, can I just ask one thing? You talked about how you went to visit Cleanaway rather than the other way around. Has Cleanaway come to you at all in terms of consulting you about what they are proposing or seeking your input?

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** They do not like me too much because of No Northern Incinerator Wollert Incorporated. They have not given me any answers to any of the questions that I have asked.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Right.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** We want to know is it going to affect me. Is it going to be pollution? How many trucks are going to be going past my house? There is a bridge there, and it is smaller than the one down here at Sunbury. It used to have a sign on there 'No trucks', and now they are going to bring 800 trucks a day apparently over that bridge. It is single lane. They are going to put up some red lights to say there is a truck coming the other way, because you cannot see them either. Everything that they told me was – I did not get an answer.

**David ETTERS HANK:** You can say it. It is under privilege.

**Rodney CUMMINGS:** Can I?

**David ETTERS HANK:** Alan, likewise, you said you had also been approached by HiQ. Can you just elaborate a little bit on what the nature of that discussion was and what came out of it?

**Alan McKENZIE:** Yes. The discussion was probably very similar to what we have heard here today about our concerns. They assured us that the plant that was going in was the same as what was in – where is Princess Mary? Denmark?

**David ETTERS HANK:** Denmark.

**Alan McKENZIE:** There is one in Denmark. They said, 'It's right in the middle of Denmark and there's houses all around it, so therefore it will be okay. It's the same sort of technology.'

**David ETTERS HANK:** That is where they are closing a third of them.

**Alan McKENZIE:** Yes. That is where their quoting was coming from. I am listening to what Pat said and what other presenters have said here today, and I am wondering whether Denmark is one of those ones where there have been some issues with the emissions or whether Denmark is better than the rest. That is a question that has got to be asked.

Also, as Pat has pointed out, is the testing regime a continuous testing regime or is it only when the plant is operating correctly? Are they testing it when they are starting it up and closing it down? For those who know what the EPA do on all of these licensed facilities, they give the licensed operator some time before they come to visit. They do not do it straightaway. They give them notice when they are coming.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Okay, thanks. Pat, just to explain, you asked a question about Minister D'Ambrosio, and we all looked at you because basically I do not think any of us would be game to speak on behalf of the minister.

**Pat CARMODY:** No worries. But she apparently rejected the one in Wollert, as Chris Bowen did in Sydney. Does that smack of a lack of confidence on her part that with the bodies under her she is not confident in what they are doing?

**David ETTERS HANK:** I would not be so bold as to speak, but I am sure you can deduce your own conclusions.

**Pat CARMODY:** It is a question.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Can I just say, first of all, I love your shiraz.

**Pat CARMODY:** Thank you.

**David ETTERS HANK:** It is a ripper. Can I just ask you: in terms of the product you put out – because it is an international product, it is a national product – to what degree is your commerciality premised upon the concept that it is a clean, green sort of product?

**Pat CARMODY:** Always we are striving to do that. With fertiliser use, it is to cut back inputs. This year I have used a drone, which cuts back compaction on the soil. It uses much lower volumes of water. It is not using diesel. Everything we are trying to do is to make it as safe as possible for people. Yeast goes in, and there is virtually nothing else. It is as natural as we can possibly make it. As much as there is the natural wine movement, I do not think anything I do is unnatural. It is quite a strange thing that people do. I do not use tannins. It is grapes and a bit of yeast and then it goes into oak and then it is bottled. I suppose one thing that I think of is spraying et cetera. I am the one who is closest to it, so I am more worried about the chemicals that are potentially going to impact on me and my family and my farm than I am about someone outside the place. I am the closest one to it, so I am at the greatest risk. I am trying to cut back as much as possible anything that I have to use chemical-wise.

**David ETTERS HANK:** Excellent, excellent. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Ettershank. Dr Mansfield has informed me she has no questions or may submit some on notice. That is us right on time.

**Tom McINTOSH:** I just wanted to say, given that we did discuss a bit of the politics during this session, we only have X amount of hearings we do every four years. They have to be voted on in the Parliament. Just so you know, the Labor Party, or the government, did vote for this hearing to occur. The Liberals and Nationals voted against it. Although it is a complicated issue, the government voted for this to occur. If we had not, we would not be here and we would not be hearing this information and government would not have a tabled report that we can consider. I appreciate and understand there are a lot of concerns and at times frustration, but the government did enable this hearing to happen. I just want to put that on the table just to be really clear.

**The CHAIR:** Very insightful comments. It is true, Mr McIntosh. And we could not be more different, all of us. Committee work is very different to the Parliament. Thank you for sharing that, Mr McIntosh. That is probably a good place to end it, so conclude the public hearing. Thank you so much for coming along today and sharing your experience as locals. It really does help us sort of understand the issue at a grassroots level before we move into our hearings in the city tomorrow. That concludes the hearing.

**Witnesses withdrew.**