T R A N S C R I P T

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

The Development and Expansion of Waste-to-Energy Infrastructure in Victoria

Melbourne – Friday 8 May 2026

MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair
Richard Welch – Deputy Chair
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WITNESS *(via videoconference)*

Mariel Vilella, Director, Global Climate Program, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives.

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 the background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various land we are gathered on today and pay my respect 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 live broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast or in the public gallery with us today.

To kick off, we will just have committee members introduce themselves, starting with Mr Berger.

John BERGER: My name is John Berger, Member for Southern Metro.

David ETTERSHANK: Hi. David Ettershank, Western Metropolitan Region in Melbourne.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Northern Victoria Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, Member for Western Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for appearing before us today at a time that I understand is very early. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* 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 this 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, and 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 please state your full name and the organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

Mariel VILELLA: Thank you. My name is Mariel Vilella. I am the Director of the Global Climate Program in GAIA, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they are kept to a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Mariel VILELLA: Okay. Thank you, Chair. And thank you to the committee for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Mariel Vilella, and my work focuses on waste streams, methane mitigation and climate policy, particularly the role of organic waste management in reducing emissions and improving resource efficiency.

I want to be clear from the outset: expanding thermal waste-to-energy infrastructure in Victoria risks locking the state into a high-carbon, high-cost and inflexible system that is inconsistent with credible climate action and a genuine circular economy transition. From a climate perspective, waste-to-energy is often presented as a solution to landfill methane. While landfills are indeed a major source of methane, incineration does not eliminate emissions, it just converts them. Organic waste that would generate methane is instead burned and released as carbon dioxide, while plastics in the waste stream release fossil carbon when they are incinerated. The result is electricity that is actually very carbon intensive – roughly 600 to 800 grams of CO_2 per kilowatt hour. Even using conservative accounting, that only counts fossil emissions. So rather than supporting deep decarbonisation, these facilities end up producing electricity that is significantly more polluting than the grid average today.

By contrast, source-separated organics systems, including composting, anaerobic digestion and biological treatment of residual waste, can reduce methane emissions by over 95 per cent while returning nutrients to the soil and producing biogas. These approaches are less capital-intensive, more scalable and more adaptable than centralised incineration infrastructure. This matters, because incinerators are not flexible assets. They require guaranteed waste flows for decades to remain financially viable, and once built they create pressure to maintain waste volumes rather than reduce them. The UK experience – where I am calling from – is a clear warning. Local authorities here have become locked into long-term contracts worth billions, often with delivery or pay clauses that penalise councils if waste volumes fall. In other words, the system depends on a steady supply of waste for decades, and that helps explain why recycling rates in England have stagnated at around 41 per cent for more than a decade while places that prioritise source separation and organics recovery, like Wales, have achieved much stronger results. Infrastructure shapes behaviour and incentives.

There are also equity and environmental justice concerns. In the United Kingdom incinerators are disproportionately located in lower income communities, with residents reporting ongoing impacts, including air quality concerns, odours, traffic and loss of amenity. Compliance data has also shown repeated permit breaches at multiple facilities over time, despite operating under modern regulatory frameworks. Internationally, policy direction is increasingly clear. European institutions now recognise that waste-to-energy is incompatible with circular economy and climate change mitigation objectives. The European Investment Bank no longer finances these projects, and the EU taxonomy for sustainable finance identifies incineration as environmentally harmful in this transition context. Importantly, proven alternatives already exist, and they are scaling successfully: composting, anaerobic digestion, reuse systems and high-quality recycling.

The question is not whether waste needs to be managed. It does. It is what kind of system Victoria chooses to build. One path locks in decades of high-emissions infrastructure that depends on constantly being fed waste. The other builds a flexible, simpler system that cuts waste, reduces emissions at the source and recovers value from materials. Once incineration capacity is in place it drives contracts, investment and policy for decades. That is the lock-in risk, and it is avoidable. Victoria should stay away from incineration infrastructure and focus instead on waste prevention, source separation and organics recovery. That is the pathway that will align with climate goals, economic resilience and long-term responsibility. Thank you, Chair, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that. We will move into questions, and we have plenty of time. I will put 7 minutes on the clock; there is no need to use it all. We will start with Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mariel, for your appearance at today's hearing. I am interested to hear a little bit more about your waste separation and how you go about that in the UK. Can you give us some examples of where it is working?

Mariel VILELLA: In the United Kingdom, where it has been working is in Wales, as I was saying. This is where we have seen bigger results. Essentially it is a combination of factors ensuring systems that work for citizens to separate at home, separating organics at the source. That is very important, because it gives a much better quality for all the recyclable streams. It separates into recyclable streams the cans, the glass, the card, the paper. Then there is also another element that they introduced, which is reducing the collection times of the residual waste – and when I say residual waste it means, you know, in theory, what cannot be recycled or the mixed waste at the end of that whole separation process.

In Wales this is what they have put forward. But I can tell you that in my work, which is working with organisations and cities all around the world, we have a lot more examples of where source separation has been working. In terms of the Global North, I would cite San Francisco as one of the cities that has been at the forefront of waste management policies that are committed to zero-waste goals that have increased the source separation and the recycling collection. Milan is another city that has provided the best results. In fact the whole of the European Union has developed policies that have made it compulsory for organic waste to be separated at source and collected at source and increased the recyclable targets up to 65 per cent.

At the moment in the UK, England, as I was saying, is very far from this target. Part of it is because there has been such an investment in incineration in the last 10 years that basically it is a complete systemic contradiction, and councils are just not able to invest in doing more of the source separation, because they are just stuck in contracts and committed to giving waste to incinerator plants.

John BERGER: Are there any financial incentives for recycling in the UK? In Victoria here we have what is called a container deposit scheme, where if you separate out your smaller bottles and some plastics, you get a return of 10 cents on each item. Are there any such schemes available or operating in the UK?

Mariel VILELLA: Yes. Thank you for the question. That is a really important point. The deposit return scheme has been in discussions for several years. I believe it is meant to be in place by 2027, and it is expected that it is going to be a great incentive to recover some beverage packages. It is still under debate which specific materials are going to be under this scheme. But precisely it is the lack of incentives that often means that the recycling is not going forward. Precisely this is the issue. There is a strong financial incentive for councils not to put the waste in the landfill, and this has been very successful. But of course there has not been such an incentive to push forward with recycling, which means that this is why incineration has been moving forward.

On top of that, now those incentives are gone. For some time there were the renewable energy incentives at the European level, which meant of course that incineration was subsidised. These renewable energy subsidies have been cancelled now, recognising that the energy from incinerators is not renewable and that those subsidies were misplaced. This has been a setback for the incineration industry in the whole of Europe. Precisely in the United Kingdom the discussion is now actually that the incinerators that are here are supposed to enter the emissions trading scheme, recognising all the emissions that they are contributing and making them pay. The discussion is that councils are scared that they are not going to be able to pay the tax that is going to be imposed on incinerators because of the contribution they are doing with climate change. The subsidies question is really important because of course it drives the kind of infrastructure that is going to be sustainable, even in the long term, and it is an issue that recycling systems in general do not have appropriate incentives.

I think what we have seen in places where there have been successful stories are, for example, citizens being helped but reducing their amount of waste. In Spain, for example, in the villages in the Basque Country, in places where citizens commit to community composting – that means they collect the organic waste and have decentralised community composting – they get a reduction on the local council tax. In Slovenia, Ljubljana is a city that is perhaps at a similar point as where you are in Victoria. They are facing these big decisions on where to invest. Ljubljana set up a whole program to do source separation and separate collection. They also implemented a whole pay-as-you-throw system, which basically organised the taxes that citizens were paying according to what they were disposing of and gave qualifications, like bonuses, on the taxes for those that reduced their waste.

A pay-as-you-throw system is also an interesting – and I think very relevant in this context – financial instrument to think about because it really gives the citizens the right signal on what is the right action. I think all of us as citizens, you know, if we consume less water, we pay for less water. But on waste, it often is not the case, and it is good that financial and economic incentives really signal positive behaviour, environmentally friendly behaviour.

John BERGER: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Berger. We will go to Mr Ettershank.

David ETTERSHANK: Thank you for your submission and for getting up early for us to do this session. I have a couple of questions. Terrific submission, thank you, and in your submission you state that waste-to-energy may reduce methane but simultaneously increase CO_2. Can you elaborate on the trade-offs in greenhouse gas emissions between waste-to-energy versus landfill in that regard? There is a bit of confusion here as to what the problem is and the extent of it.

Mariel VILELLA: Okay, so the default is that if organic waste goes to landfill and dump sites the organic waste itself there stays in anaerobic conditions, without any oxygen, and the chemistry, the decomposition of the organic waste, produces methane. We know of course that it produces methane leachates, all kinds of problems, and landfills and dump sites become very problematic. At the global level now these hotspots of landfill methane have become, like, 20 per cent of the anthropogenic methane emissions, and this is very problematic because methane is a very powerful greenhouse gas. It has more than 80 times the power of CO_2 to trap heat. So in the short term methane has a great impact on climate change, and it is very important that we mitigate this methane. Therefore there is a lot of attention on reducing the methane from landfills and dump sites. And, you know, this is absolutely true; this is very important. If the solution then is taking that organic

waste mixed up with all the municipal solid waste, which will have a great deal of recycled waste, and that is turned into an incinerator, basically you are going to be burning that waste and that means that the result of that combustion is going to produce CO_2. That CO_2 is of course then not only, you know, in the moment but also it is, like, the whole lock-in effect. So in the long term this is going to contribute more to climate change than even the landfill, and in the long term it is, like, basically not a solution. We are swapping the emissions from the landfill and dump sites for the CO_2 in the incinerator.

I would add that of course the incinerator is not producing the methane. This is what we are avoiding, yes. We are avoiding the methane from the landfill, but then we have the CO_2. I would mention as well that the incinerator produces another super pollutant which is black carbon, which is soot. This is a super pollutant as well because it also exacerbates in a short amount of time the contribution to climate change. A super pollutant is basically the concept that black carbon is not a greenhouse gas, but it is something that really increments as well the impact on climate change. Of course incinerators come with all the heavy metals – dioxins, furans, the air pollution that comes from incinerators. So you are trading methane from the landfills for CO_2 and all the air pollution, other kinds of super pollutants, and also other problems in the way of the bottom ash and the ash that goes into the sky. So that is the trade.

Of course we should bear in mind that organic waste actually has a very low calorific value, obviously because of the high content of water and because it does not work well, essentially. It is not a good fuel. You could use the organic waste to make compost, to make biogas or basically even to recover the food, because a lot of the organic waste is food loss and waste. It just does not make any sense. Even more, if we put the organic waste in the incinerator, the fact that it has a very low calorific value means that the composition of the waste that needs burning will need recycling materials or will need other kinds of fuel added – 'recyclable materials' meaning plastics and cardboard, the kinds of things that actually could be recyclable. Especially when it comes to burning plastics, then this is where the fossil emissions come in and contribute to climate change.

David ETTERSHANK: Okay. Thank you. I wanted to ask you a question. There is a lot of spin happening here, a lot of greenwashing, I think, that we are seeing. There have been references to the standards that will be applied in the incinerators here, and there is a lot of reference to the EU's BAT reference document for waste incineration 2019. I think it is described in one document as the most well-developed international standard. Would you have a view on how comprehensive and effective those standards are?

Mariel VILELLA: Yes, although I have to recognise my colleagues at Zero Waste Europe. They have done extensive work on this, so I would definitely recommend reaching out to them for the latest assessment. I believe that the BAT standards may be in the process of being updated – this is what I want to say. I do not think that the 2019 reference is the best developed to date. I think definitely in the last 10 years there has been such a dramatic shift in policy in the European Union, and I want to stress this. The European Investment Bank, the European Union taxonomy for sustainable finance – that there have been so many examples where waste-to-energy incineration has been put in the blacklist of infrastructure that really cannot be supported anymore because it does not match with the circular economy and the climate change goals has meant that these BAT standards have been put under question. I should double-check that, but I believe there has been a process to update these BAT standards, and that if the process is not underway, there are definitely signals that this should happen, because it is possible that these BAT standards are now outdated.

I would say that from our point of view, in my organisation we have been working with local communities and places where incinerators are not working. I would say that these BAT standards are not enough to prevent the problems that incinerators have caused. They are a reference of course, and I would say that perhaps it is a starting point, but they are not ambitious, they are not sufficient, they might be under discussion and definitely they are not enough to prevent the kinds of problems that we have seen. I would say that in the UK precisely this is particularly dramatic, because as I was saying before, the number of breaches that incinerators have here, the number of times that something is going wrong with incinerators here, is absolutely unsustainable and has really put incinerators at the forefront of newspapers every now and again. Especially since in the UK they closed down the coal-fired plants, so now the BBC has made clear that incinerators are the dirtiest source of energy in the UK after coal power plants.

The BAT references, of course it is important to bear them in mind but I do not think that is a guarantee that incineration can function properly and in alignment with climate goals and economic resilience and long-term responsibility, as I was saying before.

David ETTERSHANK: Okay, we might get our Secretariat to reach out and follow up on those contacts with regard to updated BAT stations. That would be terrific. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Ettershank. We will go to Dr Mansfield.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. And thank you so much for appearing today and for your submission. We heard evidence earlier today basically that indicated that with incineration being put forward as the alternative to landfill, there were not really any other options being offered by the market, and that is why incineration is sort of the best option available for some of these councils that have signed-up contracts with one particular waste incinerator in Victoria. In your experience is there an issue with waiting for the market to provide the solutions? And is there a place for government to provide some funding or other regulatory structures that incentivise the development of non-incineration waste management options?

Mariel VILELLA: Thank you for your question. I would definitely double-check the background of anyone that would say that there is no alternative to incineration – that is for a start – because that is a very partial response to the question when we are seeing, precisely, alternatives at scale. I am talking about Europe and the United States. I was making reference to Milan, to San Francisco. The whole world of anaerobic digestion is very viable in the market right now. The whole industry of composting is in the market right now. The whole, let us say, reuse solutions are in the market right now. So I think that is a false statement to say that there are no alternatives to incineration in the market now. Let us maybe understand that sentence. If they are saying that there is no other way to get the mixed waste and do something with it – burn it or something – well, exactly, because the point is to avoid that.

I would draw attention to one particular way of doing this: mechanical recovery biological treatment, which I also made reference to before. Enzo Favoino, who I believe is in your list today to give evidence, is a great expert on this. I would recommend consulting with him. Essentially the issue is that if you set up a system where you are source-separating everything, recovering the organics, doing anaerobic digestion or composting, taking the recyclables and incentivising the recycling industry, of course at the end of the day there will be some products that still are not recyclable – there is going to be a portion. And of course all these systems take time to set up. So it is about making sure that you have a flexible system in which you can continuously increase and improve your recycling rates, your source separation rates, and having everyone on board and continuously reducing the mixed waste that you get in the end. Mechanical recovery biological treatment will ensure that you have the infrastructure that mechanically can deal with optimised mechanical systems, you can recover the recyclables and you can neutralise the mixed waste that comes in the end. I think that is a very important point, because that is precisely what is needed so that this mixed waste at the end of the whole process is naturalised, is not wet – it is dry, essentially, so it can still be put in landfill in a dump site without giving the problems of methane, of leachates, and all the problems that we see in landfills in that sense. There is really no need for incineration in this process, and that avoids locking in pollution and all the economics, all the problems that I have been mentioning. All of these solutions are happening.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes.

Mariel VILELLA: That is why I will be very clear. This is happening in the world in many Global North cities that would have a comparable context to Victoria, and it could be really interesting and really relevant to learn how the government in Victoria can go about this. Of course, there is a whole robust body of regulations and policies that will incentivise it and will put this forward. The European Union has been working on the whole circular economy package in the last years, which I would say is perhaps today the most ambitious reference that you could take, because it has made the separation of organics compulsory at source, and because it has really been very clear on the separate streams of recyclables. It has provided really strong targets for recycling. It really provides a very strong target for reducing landfilling, and the only issue that we see is that it has not provided a strong target for avoiding incineration. But they have been working on all the economic incentives, so that, in fact, is very meaningful and relevant.

The case studies are here. They are reflected in the latest literature, the latest global report on waste management from the World Bank *What a Waste 3.0*. Basically it comes to some of the same conclusions that I am to coming here. So there is definitely a world of evidence, case studies, literature and examples out there that will explain how cities are moving away from incineration. They are setting up different systems that really

have the answer to our sustainable future. To anyone that is claiming that there is no alternative to incineration or landfill, I would definitely double-check where they are coming from and why they are saying that.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. You talk about the issue with waste incineration, and that if you go down that path it locks us into a particular way of managing waste because of the requirement for these facilities to be fed waste continuously, but also the fact that it then distorts markets in that it undermines incentives to look for alternative ways to manage waste. How are other jurisdictions grappling with that where you have got this fixed infrastructure that does undermine those incentives? How do you overcome that?

Mariel VILELLA: It is very difficult. It is really very difficult. I am based in Manchester. Near here there is the city of Derby, a lovely city next to the Peak District National Park. Lovely. They are now being sued by the company to pay £93 million for an incinerator that has never even operated. The company building it failed in a disaster, and yet the council is still bound to pay £93 million because the council is like, 'Well, I want to get out of this contract.' The company is still suing, and there is no way out because of this contract that they were obliged to sign because the whole incineration infrastructure is so expensive. But the whole business model of the incinerator relies on ensuring the feedstock and ensuring that the council is going to stay on and on and on, despite any failures, despite whatever changes. The whole financial model – it needs to be for up to 20 years to compensate to make it viable. I do not think that there is a way out other than waiting for the contract to finish and assuming the pain that it is and asking for help to assume the financial losses. That is why it is so important not to get into that path in the first place.

There have been key places where precisely that is the key decision-making moment that they have faced – in Capannori, for example. But in many places they have had an incinerator for 20 years, and now comes the time that they have to either renew it or expand it. And this is the key moment where political leadership is so important, because if at that time there are politicians and groups on the ground and scientists and everyone is aligned to make sure that the council can take a step away from incineration and can set up a new system, that is the time that it is more important. While the contract is there in place, I have not seen any place that has been able to avoid respecting or obliging the terms of the contract.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Okay. That is a bit frightening and depressing, because we know that a number of the councils – just this morning we had a representative from a number of councils who have banded together to sign a contract with a prospective waste incineration facility.

I guess in terms of the alternatives, you have said that they provide greater flexibility as well, rather than this sort of fixed piece of expensive infrastructure that has one way of dealing with waste. What are the features of the alternatives that mean that they are more flexible? Or the alternative systems that you are proposing – what about them creates that greater flexibility when it comes to waste management?

Mariel VILELLA: Right. For a start, like all the circular economy policies in the European Union, they have been set with increasing targets by year. So from the start, the whole design of the whole pathway is to be improving over the years, understanding as well that there is time to increase the recycling industry or the places where these materials can be taken. The landfill itself is not going to be requesting a set amount of waste. If you set up mechanical recovery, biological treatment, it does not – because the financial model is not that big, because it is not that it needs a set amount of waste to function, because it is smaller. Basically, none of the different options, even the composting plants – if you set up a composting plant, it is not that the composting plant is not going to work if you do not send enough organic waste. None of these options is designed thinking that it is not going to function, that it is going to collapse, if you do not send a thousand tonnes of waste a week. I would say that in the design of those operations, there is not a requirement to have – and the whole policy then is also designed to be increasing the feedstock into them bit by bit and improving, and also understanding that it takes time for cities and for people to get on board with some of these changes. So there is a lot of checking and addressing and troubleshooting any compliance issues that often occur as well. That is the key difference. In opposition, incinerators, as I have explained, do not work like this. But none of the other alternatives really need a certain amount of waste to absolutely function.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Yes. Just one last one: you might have already answered this, and apologies if you have, but if you were to name a couple of jurisdictions that would be good models for us to look at as alternatives to waste incineration, where do you think we should look?

Mariel VILELLA: San Francisco is often put at the forefront – and Milan and Ljubljana. I am wondering if Wales is as well. It is interesting because in Wales it also has been at the national level, which I understand is the position where you are. Wales could be an interesting reference as well. I am thinking of Global North cities. The situation can change a lot according to the economic situation of the country. But I would say those cities definitely. I would look at them.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Dr Mansfield. Thank you so much. I just have a few quick questions as well. Thank you for your great presentation and submission. A lot of the themes that you have highlighted throughout I think tie a nice bow on a number of the issues that have consistently come up throughout this inquiry. I just want to ask some questions in relation to workers and jobs. That is something that we were having a discussion about with an earlier witness. Could you talk about some of the alternative industries or jobs that you see could be an option instead of waste-to-energy?

Mariel VILELLA: Yes. Thank you for that question. That is so important. This has always been a key issue, especially because the incinerator industry really likes to put forward the number of jobs that will be created when these are set up. It has been important to show in the Global North as well how many jobs there are in the waste management industry relating to the upper options in the waste hierarchy and then with prevention, reuse and recycling, precisely to counter that argument. The evidence that we have built – and I could share a report with you that we produced in 2021 – has shown that the numbers in the upstream are so much more significant and that the jobs that the incinerator companies produce are fewer in comparison to the upper ones. I could look for that publication right now and send it to you. Of course in the global south that is even more dramatic because there is a whole informal economy where millions of people in the world are making a living out of recovering materials. But in the Global North, where there is a formalised waste management system, that is also the case. There is a projection of job creation in the recycling and reuse sectors and the repair sector that is much bigger. We have several examples of this in Europe, places where the whole market for second-hand materials, repair and reselling, that whole industry, is growing and is thriving. Yet in comparison the jobs that incineration industries are producing are much fewer and come with all this baggage. When it comes to job creation, for sure, the alternatives offer a much better prospect. The few jobs that incinerators create are just much less, and let us say, that you could think as well of the exposure to pollution of those workers. So I would not say they are decent jobs, in the sense that they are exposed to hazardous conditions as well.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much. That is really useful. That leads into my next question. I note that you speak about the fact that issues like this and air quality and everything else that comes with it seem to, across the world, disproportionately impact lower income neighbourhoods. It certainly seems here in Victoria that a lot of the areas where licences have been approved or where projects are proposed are in areas that are largely working class or that have lower socio-economic households. Could you talk about the flow-on impacts, whether from a health perspective or education perspective, that this can have socially as a result of approvals in these areas?

Mariel VILELLA: I strongly recommend that you watch the BBC documentary *The Nightmare Next Door*. This was produced in 2024, and it precisely covers several communities that have seen what it has been like for them to live next to an incinerator in the UK; the one that I follow closely here, because it is the incinerator that is closest to us in Manchester, is the Runcorn incinerator. Basically, imagine that next door you have a big factory – I think it is the equivalent to a big factory – but it is a furnace and it is burning waste all the time, and it is the other things, the flies and the rats, because it is not just the combustion of the waste itself, it is also the trucks. That is also a factor that often is not mentioned, the fact that the waste needs to be transported to these incinerators and the fact that these incinerators are so big that they are normally not just burning the waste from the village next door, they are carrying the waste from all over. I do not know the proposals in Victoria, but I would assume to get the volume of waste that an incinerator needs to get going, it will be transporting waste from all over the place, which means that there are trucks that also transport those. There also greenhouse emissions et cetera. There are trucks that are taking the waste. We have all been next to a truck that is transporting waste; it smells, and it is not nice. Imagine in your street there are trucks of waste coming in and out all day, contributing among others to that pollution, and then the waste is put there. But in that transfer there is a whole time when the waste is not burnt, and in this time this waste that is mixed waste, with all the other things like flies and rats, has a ginormous impact on the lives of people there. People then lose the value of their

homes, and the fact that they get stuck in those places because they cannot sell their homes and move somewhere else, apart from the fact they may be coming from already vulnerable economic situations, really undermines even more their situation. The value of their home goes down. They cannot sell it, they get stuck and just one thing piles up on another.

The Runcorn incinerator also is interesting because there were a lot of legal proceedings and there was a lot of political turmoil and all that. Eventually the company gave a settlement to the residents, which amounted to a ridiculous amount of money for each of them. I think after the legal costs they got a profit of £4000, which is nothing – the amount does not allow you to buy a house, essentially. They had to sign a non-disclosure agreement, that is the thing: they were given compensation, and they had to sign a non-disclosure agreement, only there were two neighbours that refused to do that. They are the ones that are speaking up in the documentary, and they give the account of what it is to be living next to incinerator. But there are many cases around the UK and around Europe, I would say, of incinerators.

I would also say that the incineration industry has been very good at profiling specific incinerators that have some interesting architectural features, like the one in Copenhagen that has got the ski slope on the roof or the one in Vienna that has got some colourful features; they are portrayed as state-of-the-art, modern technology as a way to demonstrate that it is actually possible. The failures of some incinerators are just here and there, and it is not a systemic pattern, as we are pointing out. I would say that even for Copenhagen actually – Denmark is very interesting country, because they have been incinerating and they are one of the top countries in Europe for incineration capacity, and a few years ago they realised actually how that was a clear obstacle for their climate change policies and circular economic policies. They have had to climb back. They agreed they had to decommission seven incinerators because there was no way that they were going to comply with their climate goals with the level of incineration that they were having. The Copenhagen incinerator still has problems, and it has become this massive burden on the city because it has been so expensive and it prevents them from having more progressive policies as well.

I would say the UK especially gives a lot of interesting stories when it comes to the impacts on communities. The network here is the United Kingdom Without Incineration Network. It is an organisation that has for years been supporting community groups in challenging incinerator proposals. They are very rigorous in their evidence and their ways of operating, so I would totally reach out to them. Also, just check the BBC's reports on incineration over the last few years, because they have devoted significant efforts and resources to investigate it. They have put out some really good investigative journalism – several stories – on incinerator failures and impacts on communities.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much for that. That is basically time, so I think we might leave it there, but I just really want to say thank you for coming along and presenting to us, especially so early in the morning. It has been really beneficial to the committee, so we really appreciate it. That concludes the public hearing.

Committee adjourned.