



# Zero Waste Australia

Media Statement 21/08/23

Today's [ABC news article](#) about the Rockingham waste incinerator planned for WA is a major setback not only for the frontline communities facing these projects but also for our 'communities right to know' and access accurate information about this dangerous technology and our waste management systems in general in Australia.

"There are a number of issues in this story that really must be challenged" States Jane Bremmer, Zero Waste Australia.

"Its very easy for the media to casually refer to a couple of the notorious mega incinerators in Europe, but it seems much more difficult for them to report their pollution impacts and permit breaches . The story of Denmark's novelty ski slope incinerator is somewhat darker than the rose - tinted view that the Australian government and industry like to promote."

"Zero Waste Europe have a [different opinion](#) about Denmark's iconic ski slope incinerator, *"But is it really a landmark environmental initiative? One by one, the promises made by supporters of the project have been broken, leaving it a symbol of unfulfilled environmental aspirations of Denmark, which may see its climate and energy targets compromised for decades to come."*

"All waste to energy incinerators [pollute our environment](#) with some of the most deadly pollutants in existence. Persistent Organic Pollutants such as chlorinated and brominated dioxins, and furans. [PFAS chemicals](#) are also now shown to be emitted from incinerators regardless of the Air Pollution Control equipment they use. These pollutants do not stay behind factory fence lines but travel long distances, bioaccumulating through the food chain and into our bodies, forever. You won't [read about this](#) in the Australian media or on the company's website!"

"Additionally, claims that waste incinerators offset fossil fuel emissions are farcical. Incinerators burn predominantly non-recyclable single use plastics made from crude oil – a fossil fuel. Waste incinerators are essentially fossil fuel energy plants utilising the dirtiest of fuel sources – residual waste. This is why [studies](#) have shown that waste incinerators are the most expensive and polluting way to make energy and dispose of our residual waste."

"Zero Waste Australia recently commissioned an [independent analysis](#) of the best options for Australia's residual waste management. It concluded that landfill with full pre-treatment was the best option in terms of costs to our climate, health, and environment (i.e., toxic air pollution).

*The report concludes, 'Incineration cannot be considered a 'green' or low carbon source of electricity, as the emissions per kWh of energy produced are higher than CCGT, renewables, and the likely aggregated future marginal source of electricity in Australia. The carbon intensity deficit of residual waste incinerators will increase as the electricity grid decarbonises. The use of incineration is therefore also incompatible with the achievement of local net zero climate change targets in respect of emissions from energy generation, unless coupled with carbon capture and storage. This technology is not yet commercially viable, and its use will considerably increase the cost of waste treatment.' "*

“WA has simply wasted more than a decade, not a couple of years, waiting for the two mega incinerators in the Southeast Metropolitan Region to be built. In that time WA could have implemented an alternative, sustainable Zero Waste city model. Despite the WMRR’s claims that Zero Waste is an unachievable ‘Nirvana’ - a narrative designed to support an ‘industrial inevitability argument’ for the waste disposal sector – [Zero Waste City models](#) are already happening in Europe and many other parts of the world.”

“The truth is waste to energy incinerators do not eliminate landfills, rather, they transform our residual waste into highly toxic ash requiring a secure hazardous waste landfill. In WA, this means thousands of tonnes of highly toxic ash will be trucked through Perth to the Red Hill Landfill site on WA’s Darling Scarp, to be fed into a cement hopper and poured into a class 5 hazardous waste landfill cell. These are not insignificant quantities either, with 1 tonne of ash produced for every four tonnes of waste burnt. Claims that the bottom ash can simply be used to make roads, ignores [the inherent toxicity of incinerator ash](#) and the foreseeable and preventable, leaching of toxic and hazardous substances into our environment.”

“While the City of Armadale might feel entitled to close their landfill and send their waste to the incinerator instead, WA’s ongoing waste policy mismanagement will see pristine land in regional food growing areas become our cities [new waste dump](#).”

“Claims that incinerators eliminate the problem of methane generation caused by landfill’s are similarly misleading. Organic waste sent to landfill causes methane emissions, but WA and the federal government have a FOGO policy that is designed to address this. There is no reason to send organic waste to landfill when it can be composted and returned to our biosphere as a source of much needed carbon sequestration, supporting our agricultural sector and reducing the need for synthetic, fossil fuel-based fertilisers. This red herring argument is designed to give the impression that incinerators solve both the methane and landfill problem. The truth is that no organic waste should be going to landfill or incinerators. A zero-waste city model would ensure that this doesn’t happen by investing in better collection and source separation of our waste instead of a focus on, and investment in, waste disposal which will only entrench an unsustainable linear economy.”

“We are facing existential human health and ecological planetary tipping points caused by pollution, chemicals, plastic, and waste. The WMRR’s promotion of and lobbying for, the fast tracking of waste incineration in Australia is not only unwelcome, it’s an affront to the many other more sustainable and safer waste sector industries and technologies in the reuse and recycling sector that will be permanently undermined by incinerators. Europe has recognised this by [removing all subsidies for incinerators](#) and [recommends to their member states](#) that they should decommission old incinerators and not build new ones. Instead, Europe and many other countries are moving to sustainable Zero Waste models, acknowledging that the solutions are systemic and not merely consumer driven.”

“Australia has a lot to learn and could be a world leader in renewable and sustainable local economies. Waste to energy incinerators will destroy this unique and timely opportunity if our federal government does not step in and offer real leadership and a nationally harmonised Zero Waste policy and model for all states. Our health, our climate and our future cannot accommodate incinerators. It’s a technology of the past not the future” States Jane Bremmer Zero Waste Australia. For more information – Jane Bremmer 0432041397, [www.zerowasteaustralia.org](http://www.zerowasteaustralia.org)

<https://zerowasteeurope.eu/2019/11/copenhagen-incineration-plant/>