



# Zero Waste Australia

Media Statement 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Today the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights finalised his visit to Australia with a strong statement warning that there was a deep divide between Government and community narratives on toxics, fuelling anger and distrust.

During his visit to Australia Dr Marcos Orellana met with several communities facing the threat of waste to energy incinerators. His response was clear.

“ Waste incineration is the end of the line for fossil fuels. It reflects a linear process that is incompatible with a circular economy. Incineration imposes heavy health and other costs on local communities, and it is a significant source of greenhouse gases. It has been reported that even the most modern incinerators produce dioxins, furans, and toxic ash.

The case of Tarago in New South Wales, where a waste incinerator has been proposed, is instructive on the potential health, agricultural and economic impacts. Tarago produces significant amounts of food for the State. Reportedly, the government has decided not to site incinerators in Sydney, and instead to site them in four regions, including Tarago. I heard from residents that they had not received adequate explanations for this decision, that it had been taken without consultations, and that they felt treated as second-class citizens, condemned to suffer the environmental injustice of disproportionate toxic impacts.”

Jane Bremmer Zero Waste Australia campaign coordinator states, “The frontline communities under threat of waste incineration in Australia, face significant barriers to environmental justice. The power and reach of the incineration industry dominates in our government and regulatory agencies. Industry claims that incinerators emit clean air and inert dusts, go unchallenged and seemingly supported by our elected governments and planning agencies, at the expense of independent scientific evidence to the contrary. Similarly, claims that waste incineration is part of a Circular Economy, is another false and misleading narrative designed to confuse local governments especially and communities into granting them a social licence to operate. But nothing could be further from the truth. Waste to energy incineration has no social licence to operate in Australia. Instead, Australian communities and independent experts have shown that proven, more effective ‘Zero Waste Systems’ are the future for sustainable waste management and a true Circular Economy. The time is now. Australia needs to learn the lessons from Europe and place a moratorium on all incinerator projects and invest in better collection and source separation systems to drive down the huge volumes of residual waste Australia generates. This is where the jobs are. This is where the resources for the Circular Economy are. This is where hope lives for our children’s future and a liveable planet”.

For more information: Jane Bremmer 0432041397

Zero Waste Australia is the campaign of the Alliance for a Clean Environment inc.