



Lynn MacLaren MLC

Member for the South Metropolitan Region
Legislative Council Western Australia

Unit 7, 142 South Terrace
Fremantle Western Australia 6160
Telephone: (08) 9430 7233
Facsimile: (08) 9430 7207
Email: southmetro2@mp.wa.gov.au
Web: www.lynnmaclaren.org.au

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC, Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear Chairman

Petition No. 58 – Waste to Energy Incinerators

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the above petition. I request that the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs inquire into the matters raised in Petition No. 58 – Waste to Energy Incinerators. The number of signatures, 545, demonstrates that significant public concern exists. In addition, I can advise that many constituents in the South Metropolitan electorate have raised their concerns to me in various forums over the years. It is in my view that the known risks of Waste to Energy incinerators, the proposals for incinerators in WA, and the alternatives, should be investigated by the Committee.

Mandatory regulation of dioxins and furans

Dioxin emissions from the proposed Kwinana facility are estimated to be 0.31 grams per year, per stack, assuming uninterrupted continuous operation. East Rockingham's dioxin emissions are estimated to be 0.04 grams per year, assuming uninterrupted continuous operation. These estimates might be rather conservative, and contention remains surrounding the accuracy of dioxin monitoring methods. I would draw the Committee's attention to the extensive investigation and report on Cockburn Cement during my tenure on the Standing Committee of Environment and Public Affairs from 2009-2013.

During that inquiry we heard evidence about the challenges of monitoring emissions. We also learned about incidents where emissions control equipment fails, resulting in unfiltered materials going up the stack and into the air, and affecting the surrounding community.

In the proposal for the Kwinana facility, the mixing of fly ash with bottom ash to create a building product has the potential to leach high concentrations of dioxins and heavy metals and should be reconsidered. In comparison to the East Rockingham proposal, the Kwinana proposal produces over 340% more dioxins and furans for the same amount of electrical output.

Dioxin and Furan emissions, while monitored and regulated below acceptable limits, nevertheless persist and accumulate over time in the environment, creating a potential for harm.

Investigation of air quality along the Kwinana strip

More must be done to mitigate potential environmental and health problems of ultrafine emissions. This, too, was one of the conclusions I made following the Cockburn Cement inquiry. The monitoring of ultrafine particulate matter emissions should be mandatory, and regulations should be in place to ensure only safe levels are emitted. If there are no safe limits to certain ultrafine particulate emissions, then Waste to

Energy facilities must comply and ensure their Air Pollution Control systems completely mitigate any such emissions.

Effectiveness of alternatives

In accordance with the Waste Hierarchy Model adopted by the Waste Authority, Western Australia has a directive to preference waste management strategies that principally avoid waste creation.

Initiatives employed in San Francisco, Japan and Sweden offer ways of decreasing Western Australia's waste stream while increasing its recycling rates. The success of three-bin configurations with large-scale composting and anaerobic digestion, legislation on producer responsibility for recycling and end-of-life processing, and taxes and bans on landfill quantities and compositions, are just a few of the programs which could be utilised potentially in Western Australia.

Due to a collective Zero Waste vision and waste management approach, the city of San Francisco has reduced its waste per capita to 570kg in 2010 while at the same time increasing recycling and diversion from landfill to almost 80%.

It is interesting to note the attention WA parliamentarians have given to waste incineration in Japan. One of the most important lessons we could learn from Japan is that they introduced the "Law for the Promotion of Sorted Collection and Recycling of Containers and Packaging," requiring that consumers, municipal government and producers alike share legal responsibilities in managing the end-of-life recycling of packaging and products.

Waste management initiatives introduced in Sweden include several ordinances requiring that producers bear the physical and economic responsibility for collecting and disposing of certain end-of-life products, along with various strongly-enforced taxes such as an incrementally increasing landfill tax (1999 onwards), short-lived incineration tax (2006 – 2010), and landfill ban on all sorted combustible and organic waste (2002 onwards).

Canberra recycles or reuses over 70% of its generated waste, doubling the amount of resources recovered and recycled from waste since 1995. Initiatives introduced to achieve these results included a ban on garden waste from government bins through the Waste Minimisation Act 2001, resulting in over 90% of ACT's garden waste now recovered and processed as potting mix and mulch. Other effective schemes include a ban on plastic shopping bags in 2011 and the establishment of free e-waste recycling locations. Although small, schemes such as these, coupled with much more ambitious waste-recovery goals, have enabled ACT to recycle and reuse at more than double the rate of WA.

It is clear that much can be done in Western Australia before proceeding with the proposed Waste to Energy Incinerators.

As per the Committee's request, I state that to my knowledge these issues have not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

Kind regards



Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC
Member for South Metropolitan Region
13 October 2014