

KIM Vernon

When a group of seven strangers meet over a common concern and work together to firstly learn about, and then spend their valuable time to educate tens of 1,000s of people and also manage to personally, face to face, collect over 14,000 signatures whilst still working their day and night jobs and looking after their families, you know they had to work damn hard to achieve that. It wasn't something they wanted to do, it was something that had to be done, because if they didn't, we would all suffer the terrible and long lasting consequences that Waste to Energy Incineration has on human health and the environment.

This should never have been this hard. We don't even have to pay big bucks for research to see how bad this is. The rest of the world has done it for us. They now know and this is why they are turning away from WTE. Why can't we learn from their mistakes, why do we have to make our own? We are a small country, and our pristine environment was one of our greatest strengths, yet every day we find new ways to destroy it. So let's be smart and be at the forefront of the answer for a change instead of being dragged along behind something that was thought to be a great idea over a hundred years ago? Only one incinerator has been built in the US in the last 21 years, does this sound like new and ground breaking technology to you?

If this proposal goes ahead, hundreds of thousands of women, men and children, will live, work and attend school in what is known as, "the sacrifice zone". Whilst this is bad enough, what about the 5.37 million residents of Sydney who will also be negatively affected by a Waste to Energy Incinerator smack bang in the middle of our uniquely shaped topography known as the Sydney basin. Poor air quality is a well-known problem of the Sydney basin and even more so in the Western Suburbs where air pollution is unable to escape due to hotter temperatures and lack of sea breeze, among other things. Sydney's air kills more people than traffic accidents, but by all means, let's build the world's largest toxic fume spewing incinerator there.

Each day I receive air quality alerts on my phone for the Sydney area and from 1st January this year, out of 134 days so far, we have had only 63 good air quality days, the rest were fair and poor air quality days. This is less than half/50% and also before an incinerator adds to these outrageous numbers. Not only that, I

have received approximately 70 alerts for exceedances of the National Health Standards for air quality, ozone levels and particulate matter. With this knowledge also comes fear of the problem you are living with and the dangers it presents to your health. A simple daily walk becomes another worry in your life, is it even safe to go out in this? Which is worse, not going for the walk or sucking in these dangerous toxins while you do? All of these toxins are settling on our food and water and entering the food chain, why doesn't anyone care, where will it end? All of this weighs heavily on your mind and is a continued stress that no one needs. I am astounded and appalled that I have had to waste so much of my time over the last few years to fight this when the information is readily available, simple to understand and yet, the government, who is supposed to be in place to do the right thing by the people, continue to give more and more chances to allow this insanity to continue.

I'm tired of fighting this, I'm tired of hearing the lies, I'm tired of seeing the current government dodge their responsibilities of keeping us safe and protecting us, because there is some money in it for someone. Which has become infinitely more important than people's lives in our society. I'm tired of being told, the EPA is against it, The Health Dept is against it and now the Planning Dept is against it, but we still have a few more hoops/meetings/objections/submissions to jump through. Everyone is against it, why are we even here???

I'm tired of worrying about who is going to give the proponent another chance next but most of all I am tired of learning more than I ever wanted to know about our society and the politicians who are just playing their own selfish games, people who have been so beaten down by the big end of town that they can't be bothered to attend a rally or write a letter because they feel that it is useless and a foregone conclusion and the people who get their way just because they can pay their way in. This whole experience has just been one big ugly insight.

Our goal is simple and of the greatest importance, to try to save Sydney and then Australia from this outdated and life threatening technology. Their goal is simple too, to try to make more money no matter what it costs to others in terms of human health and damage to the environment.

It's clear as day to see what's happening here when there is not one person on the side of the proposal who is working for free to make this project a reality because they honestly believe it will be the best thing for our environment. They are working towards this for one reason only, corporate greed. They are being paid to further their cause unlike those of us in the community who have surrendered countless hours and whose only motivation is to save the lives of our families and future generations. We have one chance to get this right and the time is now! Once we go down this path it is too late.

Above all else, this technology has been proven NOT to be the way forward and that Waste to Energy Incineration is neither clean nor renewable. Recently, 250 Mayors across the US voted unanimously for a renewable energy plan that does not include waste burning and the EU recently voted to end all subsidies to the waste incineration industry. It's only benefit is for the people making money from it. It is a dangerous backward step that we don't even need to make. We can learn by the mistakes of other countries after decades of use, who are now turning away from this technology. We don't need to make the same mistakes ourselves.

AUSTRALIA IS AT A CROSSROADS. DECISIONS MADE TODAY ABOUT WASTE MANAGEMENT WILL HAVE LONG TERM FINANCIAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS.

Please choose to be on the right side of history, millions of lives depend on it.

