

Resolution of Council

2 July 2020

Item 16.12

No More Incinerators

Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by Councillor Kok -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) in July, the City of Sydney Council operations will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. This new commitment helps the City meet its Sustainable Sydney 2030 target;
- (ii) waste incineration, as a fuel source, is inconsistent with the City of Sydney's leadership on renewable energy and improving air quality;
- (iii) there are now four major proposals for waste incinerators planned for the Greater Sydney area - Lithgow, Matraville, Blacktown and Eastern Creek. While these incinerators are in the Sydney Local Government Area, they pose a significant potential risk to residents nearby and to air quality in the Sydney Basin;
- (iv) incinerators release many air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides, particulate matter, lead, mercury, dioxins and furans. These substances are known to have serious public health effects, from increased cancer risk to respiratory illness, cardiac disease and reproductive, developmental and neurological problems. According to recent figures from the waste industry, incinerator plants emit more sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide per unit of electricity generated than power plants burning natural gas; and
- (v) the City of Sydney only has one air quality monitor in the Local Government Area, which has only been active since September 2019;

- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, advocating for banning the use and construction of toxic waste-to-energy generation projects in the Greater Sydney Area; and
 - (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) investigate whether any of the City of Sydney's waste is incinerated for use in energy generation in the Greater Sydney Area; and
 - (ii) report findings back to Council.
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Note – the motion above was not carried. The resolution as below was carried –

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note:
 - (i) in July, the City of Sydney Council operations will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. This new commitment helps the City meet its Sustainable Sydney 2030 target;
 - (ii) the City's position on waste to energy plants is that they should only be used for treating materials that cannot be reused or recycled, and that they should be used only as a last resort waste management option once all other options further up the waste hierarchy have been exhausted;
 - (iii) all other options have not been exhausted, Australia needs to implement wide ranging policy reform in waste management, as outlined in the Commonwealth Government's 2018 Senate Enquiry into the waste and recycling industry in Australia;
 - (iv) waste to energy plants can undermine the economic case for waste avoidance and recycling programs and infrastructure, that is why in submissions to the NSW Government the City has advocated for stronger legislation that drives better upstream recycling (e.g. mandatory recycling targets) before considering approving waste to energy plants;
 - (v) there are now four major proposals for waste incinerators planned for the Greater Sydney area - Lithgow, Matraville, Blacktown and Eastern Creek. While these incinerators in the Sydney Local Government Area, they pose a significant potential risk to residents nearby and to air quality in the Sydney Basin;
 - (vi) incinerators release many air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxides, particulate matter, lead, mercury, dioxins and furans. These substances are known to have serious public health effects, from increased cancer risk to respiratory illness, cardiac disease and reproductive, developmental and neurological problems. According to recent figures from the waste industry, incinerator plants emit more sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide per unit of electricity generated than power plants burning natural gas;

- (vii) the Lord Mayor successfully advocated to the NSW Government for an air quality monitor through her Lord Mayoral Minute 'Breathable Sydney' on 19 August 2019, and that the City is in discussions with the NSW Government about installing two more – one in Central and one in Green Square;
 - (viii) that the City will expand its network of TULIP sensors to 24; and
 - (ix) the work of Local Government NSW in this space; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, and the Minister for Energy and Environment, Matt Kean MP, advocating for banning the use and construction of toxic waste-to-energy generation projects in the Greater Sydney Area, and advocating that all options for waste avoidance, minimisation, reuse and recycling are pursued before waste-to-energy generation projects are approved in NSW. This should include, at a minimum, taking the regulatory action and investing in the ways outlined in the City's submission to the NSW Government's 20 Year Waste Strategy consultation, namely:
- (i) investing in commercialising innovation that will deliver alternatives that are better from a resource management perspective;
 - (ii) creating clear procurement pathways for business and governments to stimulate demand for sustainable goods and services;
 - (iii) creating a regulatory framework that shares the responsibility for end of life materials across manufacturers, retailers and consumers;
 - (iv) mandating data transparency supports industry to improve existing service levels, innovate for better environmental outcomes and provide consumers with confidence in their procurement decisions;
 - (v) balancing the cost of using sustainable materials by imposing tariffs on those products and services that have not been designed to adhere to circular economy principles and have a high environmental cost at end of life; and
 - (vi) developing and implementing a strategic plan for waste and recycling at a metropolitan level that identifies and secures land for existing and future waste treatment capacity requirements.

The amended motion, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

The substantive motion was carried unanimously.

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