



## Te Awamutu Waste to Energy proposal

Date Submitted:	21 June 2022	Tracking #: BRF-1789
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Delete/add Ministers as appropriate	Action sought:
To/CC Hon David PARKER, Minister for the Environment	For noting only

Number of appendices and attachments 1	Letter from Zero Waste Network
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### Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1st contact
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Director	Amanda Baldwin	022 362 5798	✓

# Te Awamutu Waste to Energy proposal

## Key Messages

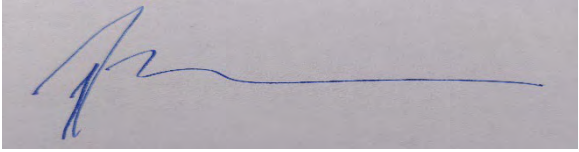
1. Your office requested some immediate advice about the attached letter from Zero Waste Network (ZWN). The letter requests that the Minister for the Environment intervenes, under Section 142 of the Resource Management Act 1991, in the resource consent application of Global Contracting Solutions Limited to the Waipā District Council to build a waste-to-energy incinerator in Te Awamutu. There is an associated resource consent application to the Waikato Regional Council. No decision has yet been made on whether to publicly notify the applications.
2. Initially this request appears similar to that made by ZWN in relation to a waste to energy proposal in Fielding and as such a full assessment of the Global Contracting Solutions Limited application was not commissioned.
3. Our advice to you on the Fielding Bioplant proposal for a pyrolysis plant was that there would be little benefit to intervening under the RMA because the RMA would still have to be applied in a similar way. The exception to this would be greenhouse gas emissions, which could not be considered by a regional council but could be considered by a Board of Inquiry or Environment Court. For the Bioplant proposal, our advice was that the GHG emissions appeared to be well-managed. Subsequently you replied to ZWN that there would be little benefit to using the call-in process.
4. Although the latest intervention request is similar, the Te Awamutu proposal has several points of difference:
  - The base technology - Global Contracting Solutions Limited are proposing the use of incineration technology, not pyrolysis like the Fielding Bioplant.
  - Scale/volume - The volume of feedstock proposed to be processed by the Te Awamutu facility is 166,525 tonnes per year - much higher than the Fielding facility which was for 40 tonnes per day (or about up to 15,000 tonnes per year). This means the greenhouse gas emissions may be of much greater significance, but the Waikato Regional Council would be unable to consider this in their consent decision.
  - Type of feedstock - We understand that they are also proposing a feed stock which would include mixed solid waste, plastics, tyres and floc from metal shredding and separation processes.
5. We have not yet had time to consider whether any of these differences would create a reason to call-in the proposal; with a key factor being the emissions aspect. We would need to look at this in more detail alongside the application documents.

## Next Steps

6. Officials recommend that you:
  - a. **Note** the contents of this briefing

- b. **Advise** if further detailed advice on this application, with a recommendation on resource consent call-in, is required

## Signature

Amanda Baldwin (Acting) Director - Policy and Regulatory Waste and Resource Efficiency	
Date: 21 June 2022	



Minister David Parker  
c/- Parliament  
[david.parker@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:david.parker@parliament.govt.nz)

Tēnā koe Minister Parker,

Thank you for your response to our request to call-in the Bioplant NZ pyrolysis resource consent application.

We are writing to again request your powers under Section 142 to call-in the resource consent applications for another waste-to-energy incinerator proposal, this time in Te Awamutu.

We are seeking your intervention in both the District Council and Regional Council applications.

### **The Te Awamutu incinerator proposal**

Global Contracting Solutions Limited (GCS) has applied to the Waipā District Council for a land use consent to build a waste-to-energy incinerator at 401 Racecourse Road in Te Awamutu, an area that is immediately adjacent to existing and planned residential housing and subject to flooding. The company has also applied for three consents for discharge-to-air, for discharge of stormwater to water, and for using cleanfill in a floodplain with the Waikato Regional Council. The facility would burn 166,525 tonnes a year comprising mixed solid waste (78,880 tonnes), plastics (35,058 tonnes), tyres (35,058 tonnes), and flock (the waste material from the metal shredding and separation process - 17,529 tonnes). This facility would be a net contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> as well as producing heavy metals, dioxins and other toxic pollutants.

### **Key criteria of Section 142 have been met**

The RMA Section 142 allows for the Minister to call in an application *that is or is part of proposal of national significance*. We submit to the Minister that this is a matter of national significance, and that he should have regard to the following factors:

- *3(a)(i) has aroused widespread public concern or interest regarding its actual or likely effect on the environment (including the global environment):* Incineration in New Zealand has long been a

contentious issue and has aroused widespread public concern and opposition in communities where it is proposed. There are numerous recent and current examples of community opposition to incineration. In 2022, in Feilding, over 140 submissions were received in opposition to the proposed Bioplant pyrolysis incinerator. In Blenheim, a 2018 proposal for a pyrolysis plant at the Bluegums Landfill was fiercely opposed by residents. In South Canterbury in 2021, the Waimate community has begun organising to resist an incinerator that failed to get community support in both Westport and Hokitika where it was originally planned. These community campaigns follow on from nationwide opposition to incineration: 84% of the 1200 submitters to the original Air Quality Standards in 2004 indicated support for a total ban on incineration including waste-to-energy. Although local Feilding residents were only made aware of this proposal in October 2021 after the Manawātū District Council had voted in favour of the lease of land and this application for resource consent had already been received by the Horizons Regional Council, a community group has formed in opposition and has presented at both Councils to express their opposition.

- *3(a)(v) results or is likely to result in or contribute to significant or irreversible changes to the environment (including the global environment):*

There are a number of far-reaching impacts of this project that warrant the Minister's intervention:

- Production of significant and sustained quantities of toxic ash

One of the major considerations for your intervention must be that this proposal creates large quantities of hazardous waste in the form of 21T/bottom ash and 2T/fly ash per day. Incinerator ash is known to contain heavy metals, Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), including dioxins and PFAS, and microplastics. The application says the bottom ash would be sent to landfill, and the fly ash used for low grade concrete. GCS has also consistently claimed in media statements that their proposed facility will produce 'inert' ash. This material is effectively unregulated in New Zealand, yet it is highly toxic. NZ's largest landfill company, Waste Management, has said it is unlikely that this would be accepted in their landfills. The suggestion of using fly ash as a concrete additive risks serious widespread contamination and the socialisation of the costs of the disposal and subsequent clean up of this material. Zero Waste Europe has recently released a report on bottom ash that could assist the Minister in understanding the composition of, approaches to regulation of, and uses of bottom ash. See [Toxic Fallout – Waste Incinerator Bottom Ash in a Circular Economy](#). Fly ash is considered to be of even greater concern than bottom ash for its concentration of dioxins and heavy metals. For further information, see [Global control of dioxin in wastes is inadequate: A waste incineration case study](#), a conference paper presented at the 2021 International Symposium on Halogenated Persistent Organic Pollutants in Tianjin, China.

- Dioxin contamination of surrounding land, water and air:

Solid waste incineration (WI)a is listed as one of the largest sources of dioxins (PCDD/Fs) in Annex C to the Stockholm Convention (SC) as it releases dioxins in air emissions but also in fly ashes and other residues from the air pollution control (APC)

system. This proposed facility would emit dioxins, furans, cyanide, mercury, sulphur dioxide, hydrogen chloride & fluoride, particulate matter and other toxic gases to the air that will settle on the surrounding land and adjacent Mangapiko Stream. The best case scenario modelling in the company's resource consent application claims that air emissions will be below acceptable thresholds, however, the application does not account for circumstances in which emissions could exceed these thresholds (such as shutdowns and restarts for maintenance or emergencies), nor does it account for the facility's decreasing efficiency over its lifetime and the consequences on emissions. Along with the immediate health and ecological damage associated with exposure to these pollutants, the longer term management of waste incinerators must be a consideration. All too frequently, the New Zealand Government and Local Government authorities have been left with the costs of remediation of long term site contamination. The legacy of dioxin contamination by the Dow Chemical facility in New Plymouth and the current issues at Tiwai Point should raise considerations about very long term management of any waste incinerator that by its nature produces dioxins.

- Addition of 150 to CO2 emissions:

According to an independent report commissioned as part of the proposal, the facility would have a carbon footprint many times greater than the same amount of waste being sent to landfill, producing 65 kt CO2e per year even after a range of possible offsets have been factored in, that they may not even be able to claim (such as the landscaping around the site, offsetting electricity generation, and recovery of metals and other materials for recycling). There is 150 kt p/a CO2e from the combustion itself. It goes without saying that we simply cannot allow the building of a facility that produces this level of emissions.

- Threatens decarbonisation of the energy sector

This application claims again and again that waste-to-energy is renewable, and touts this particular proposal as a “springboard to further uptake of renewables.” The New Zealand Government does not define waste incineration as renewable energy, and thus power generation added to the grid by way of waste incineration poses a threat to all of our efforts to decarbonise the energy sector.

- *3(a)(vi) involves or is likely to involve technology, processes, or methods that are new to New Zealand and that may affect its environment:*

New Zealand has no waste-to-energy facilities in operation. If consent were granted, this would be the first of its kind in New Zealand. While the proposed technology is in use elsewhere, New Zealand's waste economy along with our topography, hydrology and wind will have specific and distinct impacts here that must be given consideration.

### **Concern at lack of public notification**

It is also worth noting the situation in Waimate, South Canterbury where a company called South Island Resource Recovery (SIRRL) is proposing to build an incinerator that would burn 350,000T per day. The company has said publicly that it will ask Environment Canterbury for public notification of its consent applications when it lodges them later this year. This approach of open and transparent discussion of the company's plans is in stark contrast to that taken by Global Contracting Solutions in the applications to Waipā District Council and Waikato Regional Councils that argue that no notification at all needs to be undertaken because effects are "less than minor."

### **Opportunity for research and options**

It should be abundantly clear to you that more waste-to-energy incinerator proposals are coming. While you indicated that we should look to the forthcoming Waste Strategy for further guidance on the subject, we are deeply concerned that the consenting of such a major project in advance of that would render much of that advice obsolete as the proverbial 'horse will have bolted' and indeed that horse may well open the floodgates for further incinerator proposals.

A moratorium on waste-to-energy incineration of mixed waste/rubbish until the end of 2027 would enable the full implementation of the Ministry's waste work programme in a way that also aligns with the Infrastructure Commission programme on developing W2E policy, without encumbrances or predisposition to any particular outcome. This time would be an opportunity for the Ministry and local government to embed the results of the waste work programme, and be in a better position to assess the appropriateness of waste-to-energy in the context of the new legislation and strategy, and with the benefit of fuller waste and resource recovery data. Additionally, it would be an opportunity for comprehensive academic review of the role of W2E in Aotearoa NZ.

We look forward to your response in due course.

Ngā mihi mahana,

Dorte Wray  
Executive Officer  
Zero Waste Network Aotearoa

CC: Grant Robertson, Infrastructure Minister  
Eugenie Sage, MP  
Sam Buckle, Ministry for the Environment