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Working globally for a toxic free future

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for the Environment and Water

PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Plibersek,

Congratulations on your successful election to our Federal Parliament and the mandate our communities have given you and the Australian Labor Party to deliver on climate change and many other pressing health, environment, and social issues. We look forward to working with the new Federal Government to further the goal of a just, climate safe and sustainable future.

We write to bring to your urgent attention, a critical cross sectoral issue that threatens to undermine Australia's reputation in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Waste management in Australia is at a critical crossroads. While the previous federal government was praised for Australia's world leading "Waste Export Ban" the reality of this now legislated policy, is failing to meet its promise.

Last week our organisation was contacted by colleagues in Thailand [reporting that 130 tonnes of contaminated waste](#) exported from Australia, had been intercepted by Thailand customs officials. This imported waste from Australia was incorrectly classified as paper and cardboard wastes and was contaminated with a range of plastic including soiled nappies and plastic packaging. We understand that this waste will be repatriated back to Australia and the Thailand government is considering legal action.

Minister, we seek an urgent meeting with your office to discuss Australia's waste management future and the immediate steps that can be taken to improve the quality of Australian waste exports.

In addition to this waste export problem, we would like to discuss our recent correspondence to Minister Bowen regarding the threat of waste incineration in Australia and the climate, health and human rights impacts this technology will bring to Australia.

The National Toxics Network has recently commissioned a report by Eunomia Consulting to examine the best waste management options for Australia's residual waste. [This investigation](#) showed that waste incineration had the highest costs for climate, health and

air quality compared to a range of other non-combustion alternatives. Sadly, most states in Australia are now facilitating and approving these projects without the necessary checks and assessments needed for such a high-risk industry. Frontline communities, especially in NSW right now, are carrying the burden of risk and the inevitable adverse impacts associated with this industry. This is an untenable situation that requires urgent national policy intervention and legislative safeguards for all Australian communities. Waste incineration is an industry more polluting per unit of energy than coal, oil, and gas. It is also the most expensive way to manage our waste or make energy.

Australia's plans to export our waste as a fuel product to burn in the Asia Pacific region, as well as in the cement industry here in Australia, is a recipe for a climate, health, and toxic air pollution disaster.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage with your office on sustainable zero waste models that support climate justice, resource conservation, human rights, and a circular economy in Australia.

We appreciate your commitment to addressing the serious threat of plastic waste in our oceans and to marine life. The dumping of contaminated waste in the Asia Pacific region and the incineration of waste here in Australia, poses significant threats to our ocean and indeed our entire food chain through the inevitable release of persistent organic pollutants, microplastics and other waste chemical threats.

Safer, more effective waste management solutions exist, and we would welcome the opportunity to assist the federal government to embrace these.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Bremmer

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