

# Victoria should consider burning rubbish to generate energy, reduce landfill, report finds

By [Joseph Dunstan](#)

Source: ABC News.

Updated 26 Feb 2018, 10:47am



PHOTO: [Waste-to-energy technology could reduce landfill by about 90 per cent, the report said.](#) (Johnny Berg: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu))

**Burning rubbish is being touted as a viable alternative to landfill for Victoria, under a waste-to-energy proposal put before the State Government.**

The Andrews Government commissioned a series of public consultations on waste-to-energy technology after [local councils took legal action](#) against the expansion of Victoria's largest tip, at Ravenhall, last year.

The public consultation report urged the Government to support the creation of a \$220 million waste-to-energy plant in Melbourne's western suburbs.

The technology involves burning rubbish to produce electricity, which could reduce the amount of waste going to landfill by around 90 per cent.

A report overseen by Labor Upper House MP Cesar Melhem found there was "broad support" for waste-to-energy technology over landfill.

"To be frank I think people in the west have had enough putting up with that odour," he said.

"Mind you, things have improved in recent times, but I think we need to find a long term solution, and we believe that [this] is a long term solution.

"It's a global responsibility, and if that means we have to pay more money to come up with better alternatives to dispose of our waste, then I think reasonable people will accept that's a price we should pay."

## Management of toxic pollutants a concern for community

The public consultation report found residents were concerned about how pollution from the proposed plants would be managed.

The incineration process produces fly ash containing toxic metals, which must be disposed of through hazardous waste landfill.



PHOTO: [Burning](#)

[rubbish is about twice as expensive as putting it in landfill, the report stated.](#)

Around 3 tonnes of fly ash is produced for every 100 tonnes of rubbish burnt.

Standards around pollution control on waste-to-energy plants have improved in recent years, according to Deakin University's hazardous materials lecturer Trevor Thornton.

"Incinerators haven't had a good reputation or good name over the years because going back they were pretty dirty, not monitored — pollution control devices weren't great," he said.

"But nowadays, the controls on them and the way of managing the fly ash —where it gets disposed of, how it's managed — is a lot more sophisticated than it was.

"Certainly agencies such as the EPA have got fairly strict controls on how they are managed and where they can be disposed of."

The Environmental Protection Authority in NSW [opposed the construction of a waste-to-energy plant in western Sydney](#) last year due to concerns over pollution.

There is also [uncertainty surrounding the management of recyclable waste in several Victorian councils](#), after China imposed a ban on importing low-grade and contaminated rubbish.

## Plants could be operating in Victoria by 2025

The report included a proposed timeline to set up the state's first waste-to-energy plant within the next eight years.

It suggested a group of local councils in the western suburbs combine their waste management contracts to feed a 300,000 tonne per annum incinerator near existing landfill sites.

The report stated the cost of disposing of rubbish via waste-to-energy was roughly \$100 per tonne — about twice the cost of landfill.

It said waste companies would like the State Government to help them negotiate access to the power grid so they could sell the electricity produced by the plants.

Waste-to-energy plants are used in Europe and Asia, and construction has begun in Perth on what will be the first plant in Australia.

The Victorian Government said it had not yet formed a position on waste-to-energy technology.