



# Fiji Labour Party

## Submission

### Vuda-Saweni Waste to Energy Project

The Fiji Labour Party strongly objects to the proposed setting up of a waste to energy incinerator at Vuda/Saweni touted as a \$1.4b project to produce 80Mw green energy to go into the national grid.

Quite apart from the serious environmental and health concerns associated with it, the project if permitted to go ahead, will have highly damaging impact on two of Fiji's main revenue earners – mineral water and tourism. Not to mention the adverse effects on our biodiversity and the ecosystem.

The purity and composition of Fiji's underground water will likely be affected through the emission as well as seepage of toxic materials into our ground water from wastes stored and processed at the plant. There are a number of major bottling plants in the Nadi/Vuda highland areas. These are likely to face contamination of their products.

The Saweni-Vuda coastline is also earmarked as a prime tourism development zone with its pristine, unpolluted beaches, seen as among the world's most attractive destinations.

Tourism Minister Viliame Gavoka has already voiced concern that the plant would jeopardise a number of quite big tourism development projects in the pipeline for the corridor.

Equally worrying is the proposal to bring most of the waste from overseas, mainly Australia, for processing here. Are we going to become a dumping ground for waste from other countries? How feasible is this? Secondly, who knows what sort of waste will be brought in and how toxic they will be?

The suspicious manner and haste with which this project is being fast-tracked is fraught with irregularities, inconsistencies and improprieties.

It must be rejected but not before a full investigation on the respective roles played in it by Prime Minister Rabuka and the Environment Minister Lynda Tabuya.

### **The Financials**

The investment is proposed by a foreign-owned local company registered in August 2025 *The Next Generation Holdings Pte Ltd* (TNG) with Ron Cromb of Lyndhurst Garments as the sole Director and shareholder. Australian billionaire Ian Malouf is named as principal investor.

Little else is known about the ownership structure, paid up capital or local partners of the company. The lack of accountability and information is highly suspicious.

The project is being touted as a \$1.4 billion investment but no financials have been provided.

The holding company, TNG Holdings (Fiji) Ltd and its subsidiary TNG (Fiji) Pte Ltd are both \$1000 companies with Ron Cromb as the sole shareholder and Director, according to the very scant information filed with the Registrar of Companies.

There is no information on how this massive \$1.4b project will be financed, except that its proponents say that the money will come from abroad.

### **The Legal Issues**

There appears to be an astonishing breach of, or oversight by, the Environment Ministry in following proper procedures in the handling of the EIA: They are as follows:

1. The Ministry had failed to carry out due diligence on the company and was unaware until well into March 2026 that Ian Malouf's application to set up a similar project in Australia was rejected outright by the New South Wales Industrial Planning Commission when he lost a 7-year legal battle in the matter in August 2023.
2. More seriously, how could the Ministry have approved a terms of reference for the EIA for the Vuda project when TNG **does not carry a legal title to the land for the project**? Any application for EIA must show proof of legal title or lease at the first application. TNG had neither.

The proposed waste project requires 85 hectares of beach front land for the incinerator and the envisaged deep-water port at Nakakoro Pt in Vuda.

Part of this, some 25 ha is land Ron Cromb owns on Nakakoro Pt which he bought in 2017 for \$5m. The project needs another 60ha.

But Crown Lease 16531 leased to Ron Comb's company Naikorokoro Development Pty Ltd is under dispute with a long history of lease breaches and non performance, according to the Lands Department.

It is a special lease for Tourism development. Not industrial. Cromb took over the lease on 16 October 2018 and has since failed to erect a 2000 sqm tourism facility on it, as required by the lease conditions.

In December 2025 lawyers for TNG, Siwatibau and Sloan, tried to transfer the lease to TNG. On 18 February 2026, the Lands Department replied rejecting the transfer because of “long standing breaches”.

It warned that government may impose penal rent or may even repossess the land.

Oddly, and in gross violation of procedures, the Environment Ministry went ahead and approved a TOR for the EIA in the absence of a recognised land title for the project. The TOR was issued on 28 November 2025 weeks before an application for transfer was even lodged. A re-zoning of the said land has still not taken place.

Divisional Manager for the Lands Department, Uraia Rakaria told the public consultation at Naikorokoro on Saturday that the land was still marked as special Tourism zone. No application had been made for rezoning to industrial.

But he said the Department was now willing to reconsider its position should a rezoning application be made, and certain requirements met. He had no right to say so.

The point remains that the Environment Ministry issued a TOR for EIA for a highly polluting industrial undertaking on a Tourism lease when a transfer had not even been applied for.

Furthermore, this was even before an application had been lodged with the Town and Country Planning or plans submitted with the Lautoka City Council for the project.

Landowner consent: EIA proposal must demonstrate landowner consent to the proposed development BUT the landowner, in this case the Lands Department is threatening to cancel the lease and impose penal rent. The Department has so far rejected consent to industrial development.

Besides the 25 ha Crown lease under dispute, the project requires another 60ha of land for the incinerator and the deep-water port. Landowners in the said corridor are strongly opposed to an incinerator at the site as most of them have already lined up deals with entrepreneurs for tourism-related developments.

### **The genesis of the Vuda waste project**

It is worthwhile looking at the origins of the project to put the entire matter into proper perspective and understand the motives behind it.

In 2014, Australian billionaire Ian Malouf’s company *The Next Generation* officially lodged an application for a “waste to energy” project to be set up in Eastern Creek, Western Sydney, New South Wales after several years of discussions with the NSW government.

The project was for a \$A600m incinerator to process over 1 million tons of waste annually. There was immense public opposition to the project.

In March 2018 a NSW parliamentary inquiry recommended against the facility.

In July 2018, the Industrial Planning Commission refused consent for the facility.

In January 2019, TNG appealed the decision to the NSW Land and Environment Court. Before the Court could make a final ruling on the appeal, in July 2022 the NSW government “effectively banned” the project permanently by regulating against such facilities in the Greater Sydney Area.

Malouf’s company appealed against the regulation but lost when the NSW Court of Appeal ruled in November 2022 that the government had the legal power to make such a regulation.

Finally in August 2023, after years of legal appeals and new government regulations against such facilities, TNG announced its decision to drop the project.

Malouf then set his sights on Fiji, having reached a dead-end in Sydney. He met with Prime Minister Rabuka in Australia in July 2025. Things moved pretty fast after that:

- 4 July 2025 PM meets with Ian Malouf in Australia;
- 27 August and 15 September 2025 the two TNG Fiji-related corporate entities are registered with the Registrar of Companies
- 28 November 2025 – Ministry of Environment issued the terms of reference for an EIA
- 16 January 2026 Lynda Tabuya appointed Minister for Environment and Climate change
- 21 January 2026 – first round of public consultations on the Vuda waste project with strong objections from the people in the area

Prime Minister Rabuka has publicly said that government has not approved the project. Yet in one of its initial articles on the topic (10 Jan 2026) The Fiji Times claimed the project had ‘government backing’.

Earlier this month Ian Malouf speaking to The Australian himself said the TNG project had the backing of PM Rabuka and his Cabinet: opposition is coming from “a few selfish people” who do not want the development in their area, he said. He also told Fiji Village that he had Rabuka’s support.

Official versions of the matter are conflicting and confusing.

PM Rabuka told The Fiji Sun (8 April) that Cabinet had only approved the company to carry out due diligence, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and public consultations. “No approval has been made for the business to proceed,” he said.

But Environment Minister Lynda Tabuya told FBC news (April 2) that Cabinet had not approved the project: She said *the proposal was only presented to Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who directed investors to follow formal government channels.*

Fiji's High Commissioner to Australia Ajay Amrit may also have been closely connected with the negotiations it seems. He claims (dubious) responsibility for facilitating the shipment of 700,000 tonnes of Australian waste to Fiji annually for the proposed Vuda incinerator.

Secondly, he is reported to have been present at a function in Melbourne held on Malouf's superyacht on 6 March by a Ron Comb foundation.

Why did Australia reject the scheme? It found the project was "not in the public interest because of uncertainty around the project's impact on air quality, water quality and human health."

Moreover, on the very day that the NSW Planning Commission decision was handed down, a magistrate fined Malouf's Dial A Dump company for failing to properly cover asbestos waste.

How then can anyone trust assurances given in the EIA by TNG that the Fiji company will manage toxic waste responsibly?

We strongly believe that a project of this magnitude with such far-reaching implications to the environment and the health of our people, is being unnecessarily rushed. Very limited time has been given for a proper assessment and public debate on the issue, the public consultation process itself appears to have been one-sided with questions from the floor reportedly confined to just three.

The people of Fiji have so far shown massive opposition – landowners in the area, tourism and sporting organisations with stake in the area as well as residents, and everyone else concerned with the well-being of the nation. Critical opposition is surfacing even from government's own ranks.

In view of all this we ask: Why was a second round of consultations necessary when the first one was emphatically opposed? Is the project being shoved down our throats by people who may have a pecuniary interest in it?

### **Environmental, Health issues**

Labour's main grounds of objection to the facility is in terms of the enormous environmental and health issues connected to it - basically the same reasons why it is was rejected by the NSW Industrial Planning Commission.

Besides, our waste management problem is miniscule compared to the massive 700,000 tonnes a year that will be imported from Australia and other Pacific Island nations to meet the plant's 900,000 tonne waste requirement annually.

The logistics of such a move is mind-boggling. Even moving Fiji's entire waste to be incinerated at the Vuda plant on a daily basis conjures up horrific visions of stinking, waste laden trucks moving along our highways, adding to our already congested traffic issues, spreading foul smell and disease along the route.

The incinerator proposed for Fiji is far too huge, possibly the biggest in the world. Fiji does not need it.

Worse, we are told if approval is granted waste material from Fiji and overseas will be stockpiled at the site for the next several years until the plant starts processing in 2029.

This is not on. What Fiji needs is a comprehensive national waste management strategy. There is none in place currently. And it is undesirable to commit to piecemeal development by largely foreign owned companies whose major interest is commercial and money making.

## **Health issues**

There is already growing concerns worldwide at the health impact of such waste incinerators. They produce toxic emissions hazardous to the health of nearby residents.

Waste incinerators produce hazardous emissions including dioxins, furans, heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, acid gases - hydrogen chloride, sulfur dioxide - nitrogen oxides and other fine particulate matter.

These toxic pollutants, alongside carbon dioxide are linked to cancer, reproductive issues, developmental defects, and serious environmental contamination.

Studies of communities living near incinerators have found high rates of cancer, respiratory disease, miscarriage, premature birth, and congenital abnormalities.

They will also have a deleterious impact on the ecosystem and pose a major threat to biodiversity in the area - pollute and endanger marine life along coastal areas. This will adversely affect fishing as well as recreational activities in our coastal areas. No wonder tourism personalities are leading the protest against the project.

Reportedly, 22 hectares of mangrove forest will have to be destroyed to set up the plant and jetty at Nakorokoro Pt.

If TNG is given approval to operate from the Vuda site the adverse impact on the Tourism industry will be tremendous.

## **The Heritage site**

The Vuda/Saweni location for the plant is one of Fiji's prime recreational, tourism areas. It also has deep cultural and historical significance as Vuda is believed to be the site where the indigenous people first landed. It is classified as "heritage coast" for its historical significance.

The project is too close to residential, agricultural and recreational areas and currently, three tourist resorts, and within striking distance of nearby heavily populated areas and Fiji's top resorts at Denarau and Naisoso Islands.

Landowners are equally opposed. Some of them have already given out leases nearby to developers for new resorts and other tourism-based developments and are opposed to having such an incinerator adjacent to their properties.

## **Sporting Facilities**

It should be noted that both of Fiji's major sports organisations – rugby and soccer - are planning the construction of multi-million dollar stadiums and academy for the Vuda area.

The Fiji Rugby Union is well into plans for the construction of a world class facility incorporating a museum and stadium as a permanent home for FRU in Lauwaki, Vuda with high performance training facilities.

The Fiji Football Association is also considering a \$25m international stadium and academy in Lomolomo, near Vuda.

Both the sporting organisations are highly concerned about the emission of toxic gases from the proposed Vuda facility should it be allowed to go ahead.

The question we must ask before approval is given: does the project align with Fiji's long term national interest?

## **To Conclude:**

Giving consent to the Vuda Waste to Energy project could contradict Fiji's COP climate commitments and international environmental standing. Concerns include importing up to 700,000 tonnes of Australian waste annually, undermining local recycling, and environmental impacts on coastal sites, causing massive local backlash.

Conflict with Climate Pledges: Opponents argue that allowing a foreign waste incineration plant contradicts Fiji's image as a "COP champion" committed to climate-friendly initiatives.

Opposition to 'Dumping': Residents and environmental groups argue that turning a pristine coastal area into an industrial zone for foreign waste undermines Fiji's environmental integrity.

Recycling Suppression: The Pacific Recycling Foundation (PRF) warns that the facility could lock Fiji into a “burn not cycle” model, discouraging recycling efforts by requiring a consistent high volume of waste (including recyclables) to keep the incinerator operational.

Environmental and Social risks:

Significant objections have been raised by local residents and indigenous landowners (Tokatoka Wadigi) regarding air pollution, water contamination, and potential harm to local tourism and fishing industries.

Finally, we submit that the issue is of immense national concern and should rightly be referred to the appropriate Parliamentary Standing Committee to consult with the people and report thereon to Parliament.

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**Leader**  
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