



**CANBERRA REGION
JOINT ORGANISATION**

Regional leadership connecting our communities

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6 March 2026

The Hon. Nichole Overall MLC
Chair
Select Committee on Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities
Parliament of New South Wales
By email: nichole.overall@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Overall

**Request to give evidence at a public hearing of the
NSW Parliament's Select Committee on Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities**

I am writing to you following our recent discussion with respect to the NSW Parliament's Select Committee on Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities that you chair and which was established to inquire into and report on proposed energy from waste facilities.

As chair of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO), which recently made a submission to this select committee as part of its inquiry, I respectfully request an invitation for myself and CRJO's Executive Officer, Sharon Houlihan, to the upcoming public hearing to be held at Goulburn/Tarago on 14–15 May 2026.

CRJO's eleven NSW member councils, together with the ACT Government as an associate member, workshopped our regional position on the future of waste and regional waste solutions, including energy from waste solutions, in December and we would greatly value the opportunity to give evidence as to the regional position at the public hearing.

While our member councils do not necessarily hold the same view as to the appropriateness of energy from waste as a waste solution, there are many areas we do agree on, which make up our regional position, as follows:

1/ Waste should not be sent to our region and other NSW regions for processing into energy without also being similarly processed in Sydney, as occurs in many cities all over the world

We understand that the reasons for this policy position in NSW were political and retained across both sides of politics, rather than based on the actual science and safety of waste-to-energy processing. The clear message being heard by our regional communities, however, is that the NSW government considers it is not safe to burn waste to produce energy in the city and so it isn't unreasonable for regional people to draw the same conclusion, which is what we see happening in our region.

2/ Waste to energy is a solution of second last resort, second only to landfilling in terms of the best ways of managing waste

Higher order waste management solutions starting with minimising waste generation in the first place and cascading through materials recovery, re-use and recycling need to be the focus of investment and decision-making by state government, not the end-of-cycle solutions of waste-to-energy and landfilling.

3/ Little incentive for Sydney to reduce waste generation

Not only does the policy position to export Sydney's waste to the regions for processing, whether by landfilling or by waste-to-energy processing, create a strong message of it not being safe, it provides little incentive for Sydney's businesses, industries and households to reduce waste generation in the first place nor to do better with higher order waste management such as waste minimisation, proper separation of waste streams and resource recovery from waste streams for reuse and recycling.

Creation of waste-to-energy markets has the potential to further disincentivise waste creation and management behavioural change of Sydney's industry, business and households by creating a commercially viable, end of life 'solution' for waste generated in Sydney. Both waste-to-energy and landfilling, as end of life waste treatments, should be the treatments of last resort, not seen as a ready solution to the city's waste management problems, especially when out of sight in the regions.

Waste should be dealt with where the people generating it can see and feel the impacts of its generation and we urgently need the NSW Government to reconsider its policy of no waste-to-energy facilities in Sydney, for the purpose of the perceived negative impacts being understood and felt in the metropolitan area and the resulting message that it is better to minimise waste.

4/ For reasons of feasibility regarding costs and for building social licence for waste to energy facilities, there needs to be clear end uses for the energy generated and approved state locations for waste to energy precincts need to be in locations proximate to the end use demand for the energy produced

In examples around Australia where there is a clear end use for energy produced in waste to energy plants, such as in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria where the local waste to energy infrastructure services a high-employing local mill, there is a social licence developed for such developments.

5/ Community benefits-sharing payments to councils where state significant infrastructure is being hosted in their local government areas

Local benefits for hosting waste-to-energy precincts must be prioritised in state policy settings and planning processes. Our regional community is already distrustful of renewable energy state significant developments which deliver benefits for all of the state's electricity users but disbenefits for local host communities. We are already advocating state government to mandate long-term community benefit-sharing payments to councils where state significant infrastructure and developments are hosted.

Community benefit-sharing payments, to be made not by state government but by private operators, to local councils where state significant infrastructure is being hosted would assist councils to work with their communities to return benefits to them as the main regional providers of local infrastructure. Waste-to-energy projects are another example of state significant developments where the mandating of such payments is needed, via the planning process.

6/ Need for effective economic solutions to waste disposal to properly incentivise extended producer responsibility to minimise waste generation, namely properly set waste levies

Business and industry will always choose their behaviours and investments based on financial implications and currently, many are choosing end of life waste solutions, whether landfilling or waste-to-energy, over higher order waste minimisation, separation, reuse and recycling solutions.




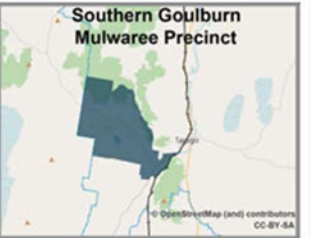
7/ Full amount of waste levies raised needs to be re-invested in waste minimisation and management and returned to the sectors and regions which deal with the waste

Whether invested in the public sector (state and local government), the private waste management sector or for research and development, full investment of the collected levies in waste management solutions is imperative, especially in higher order waste minimisation, waste separation and resource recovery improvements that are infinitely preferable to both landfilling and waste-to-energy.

NSW state government consideration background

There is not a lot of information on the public record about the decisions of cabinet over time to establish the four energy from waste precincts however, as promised, I have included below my understanding, unverified, of some relevant background.

1. In September 2010 The Hon John Barilaro, then NSW Deputy Premier, NSW Minister for Regional NSW and NSW Minister for Industry and Trade, and The Hon Matt Kean, then NSW Minister for Energy and Environment, announced the establishment of four energy from waste precincts located near Goulburn, Parkes, Northern Rivers and Lithgow (details in figure below).
 - a. The main justification was to provide jobs and investment in regional NSW (see attached press release) and provide certainty for proponents.
 - b. There was no published needs assessment, transport or logistics modelling as far as I am aware.
 - c. There was no published discussion about why these four locations and why other locations may have been more or less suitable.
 - d. The most detail provided was in the Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan released at the same time which provided this information (refer extract from page 8 below) on the key reasons these four sites were selected.

			
<p>1. The existing facilities in the West Lithgow/Wallerawang precinct and associated infrastructure will be able to service Greater Sydney and surrounds and utilise existing energy and transport infrastructure and will provide regional jobs and economic growth to Lithgow.</p>	<p>2. The Parkes Special Activation Precinct sits alongside the Inland Rail route – a 1,700 km freight network that will connect Victoria, NSW and Queensland – which could provide an opportunity to efficiently service the waste management needs of NSW. The NSW Government has already begun a market-sounding exercise and will continue working with proponents to identify opportunities for energy from waste development in this precinct. This is also supported by the NSW Government’s Master Plan for the precinct.</p>	<p>3. The Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct could service the waste management needs of northern NSW and catalyse opportunities to create new jobs in the energy and waste management sector. This aligns with actions being taken under the NSW Government’s Regional Development Framework.</p>	<p>4. Southern Goulburn Mulwaree Precinct and associated infrastructure is co-located and integrated with other resource recovery, waste management and renewable energy generation and has existing infrastructure in place to import waste from Greater Sydney and other regional locations.</p>
<p>Exemptions are provided across all of NSW where the use of waste or waste-derived feedstock replaces coal or petroleum-based fuels – or a less environmentally sound fuel – to generate energy at a site, and where that energy is then used predominantly to power an industrial or manufacturing process on-site, rather than exporting electricity to the grid.</p>			

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- e. Note that there is an exemption allowing energy from waste outside the four precincts but only for limited applications for specific companies to use the energy “behind the meter” i.e. not allowed to be connected to the grid.
 - f. John Barilaro, in the attached media release said that the facilities would be strategically located to service the whole state.
 - g. John Barilaro described energy from waste facilities in these four locations as an innovative way of managing waste, driving investment into the bush and providing certainty for communities.
Mr Barilaro said *“The NSW Government is delivering waste to energy facilities to help power a manufacturing renaissance and bring jobs to regional NSW”* and *“These modern facilities will be located strategically to service the whole state, aimed at driving waste out of landfill and into the circular economy, using state-of-the-art technology to maximise regional economic and employment benefits.”*
 - h. Most of the four local mayors (if not all) subsequently stated that they had not been consulted on the four locations.
 - i. With respect to other potential locations, potential energy from waste facilities in the Sydney area, TNG Sydney – Eastern Creek, SUEZ Sydney – Botany, Cleanaway Sydney – Eastern Creek along with regionally-based Jerrara – Goulburn, were withdrawn by proponents, regionally-based REGroup / Energy Australia – Lithgow Mt Piper decided to not proceed for their own reasons and there was never a formal proposal for Richmond Valley.
2. Regarding the Parkes facility, The Department of Regional Development subsequently ran a tender process for an operator of an energy from waste facility within the Parkes Special Activation Precinct. This is the only Tender I am aware of. Two companies were shortlisted (Veolia and Tribe as lead of a consortium) and the tender was awarded to Tribe (now renamed the Parkes Energy Recovery).
 3. There was no tender run for facilities at the Southern Goulburn Mulwaree Precinct.
 4. Subsequently, Richmond Valley and Lithgow were taken off the list by the NSW Environment Protection Authority and they are no longer available. Two new sites near Lithgow and Tomago have been added to a draft new list which is yet to be formally gazetted.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to give evidence at the upcoming public hearing in Goulburn/Tarago. If you wish to discuss any aspect of this correspondence, I welcome your contact and, to arrange an invitation to attend, please contact Sharon Houlihan, CRJO Executive Officer on

or

Yours sincerely,

Cr Russell Fitzpatrick
Chairperson
Canberra Region Joint Organisation

Attachments:

20210910 John Barilaro Matt Kean media release - CERTAINTY FOR COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY ON ENERGY FROM WASTE

202109 NSW GOV energy-from-waste-infrastructure-plan