Submission No 21

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

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Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities in Regional NSW - Tessa Morrissey

My name is Tessa Morrissey. I am a 32-year-old woman raising two young daughters on the land with my husband. We are a farming family committed to building a healthy life in regional New South Wales.

In addition to being a farmer, I am also a health professional working in childhood development. This gives me a deep awareness of how environmental exposures in early life can have long-term effects on health, learning, and development.

I am making this submission in relation to the Terms of Reference (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (h), and (i). I do not wish to provide evidence at a hearing.

Concerns Regarding the Proposed Energy from Waste Facility in Parkes

Health and Childhood Development (Terms b, c, d):

As a health professional, I know how critical early childhood is for brain development, physical health, and long-term wellbeing. Children are more vulnerable to environmental pollutants than adults due to their developing organs and higher intake of air and water relative to body weight. The proposed Parkes facility raises serious questions about the potential spread and quality of emissions. Even if the technology is considered modern, the risks of toxins such as dioxins, heavy metals, and fine particulates remain. These contaminants can accumulate in soil, water, and food chains, with potential to affect growth, learning capacity, and overall health outcomes in children. Families in our region rely heavily on rainwater harvesting for drinking water and farming soil for food production. Any level of contamination could pose significant risks for both.

Agricultural and Regional Impacts (Terms d, e, f):

Agriculture is not only our livelihood but the backbone of the regional economy. Contamination of soil or water—even at low levels—can harm productivity, consumer confidence, and long-term sustainability of farms. Our property lies directly alongside the Inland Rail, which is expected to link to the proposed facility. This would bring constant waste freight through our area, compounding the risks with noise, dust, and transport-related hazards. It is particularly concerning that waste generated in Greater Sydney is being transported hundreds of kilometres to Parkes. If these facilities are safe, then surely they should be built where the waste is produced. Why should regional families and farms carry the risks created by city populations?

Equity and Long-Term Sustainability (Terms g, h, i):

The current model appears to shift the burden of metropolitan waste management onto regional communities. This creates inequity and raises fundamental questions of fairness. Furthermore, international best practice shows that even the newest waste-to-energy facilities require rigorous emissions monitoring. Communities must have access to transparent, real-time data, and independent oversight must be enforced to protect public health.

Recommendations and Alternative Solutions

1. Invest in Waste Reduction and Recycling – Before approving large-scale incineration, NSW should focus on proven waste minimisation strategies such as advanced recycling, composting, and circular economy systems.

2. Locate Facilities Near Waste Sources – If pursued, energy recovery facilities should be sited closer to metropolitan waste sources, reducing unnecessary freight and ensuring risks are not shifted to rural families.

3. Conduct Independent Health and Development Impact Assessments – A full, independent review of potential health effects—particularly on children—must be completed before approvals are granted.

4. Enforce World-Class Emissions Monitoring – If facilities proceed, real-time data on emissions should be publicly available, with strict independent oversight.

5. Protect Agricultural Communities – Mechanisms for compensation and income protection must be established if farms are negatively affected by contamination, reduced productivity, or reputational damage.

As a mother raising two children on the land, and as a health professional working in childhood development, I cannot ignore the risks posed to the next generation.

Children deserve clean air, safe water, and healthy food to thrive. Farmers deserve confidence that their land will remain productive and sustainable. Regional families should not be asked to shoulder the risks of Sydney's waste.

If energy from waste is truly safe, it belongs near the communities creating the waste—not transported hundreds of kilometres to Parkes. Until safer and more equitable solutions are explored, I urge the Committee to proceed with caution and place the health of children and families at the centre of decision-making.

Respectfully submitted,

Tessa Morrissey

8th September 2025