Submission No 39

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Mrs Kerrie Plummer

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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Kerrie Plummer. I am 70 years old and have proudly called the Parkes Shire home since 1988, when my late husband and I made the decision to leave Sydney in search of a better life for our family. We raised our two sons here, both of whom have built successful careers in the mining sector and are now managers in their respective fields. One of my sons also owns and operates a local business in Parkes, further deepening our family's ties to the region.

This community is not just where we built our lives — it is where I buried my husband, where my grandchildren have grown up and attended school, and where one of them is now pursuing a career in the plumbing trade. After working continuously in the Parkes Shire for nearly four decades, I am looking forward to spending my retirement here.

I share this background to make clear how deeply invested I am in the wellbeing of this region — not just for myself, but for my children, grandchildren, and future generations of residents. It is from this place of deep connection, care, and concern that I submit the following objections to the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility in Parkes.

My deep concerns about the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility planned for Parkes. Although this project is being presented as a sustainable waste management and energy solution, it raises serious and well-documented concerns across environmental, public health, economic, cultural, and social dimensions. These issues must be thoroughly examined before any decisions are made to proceed.

Impact on Agriculture and Food Security

The Central West is one of New South Wales' most important agricultural regions, known for its pristine environment and premium-quality produce. Emissions from EfW plants—including dioxins, heavy metals, and fine particulates—pose a real risk of contaminating air, soil, and water. These pollutants can accumulate in crops and livestock, threatening food safety, farm viability, and consumer health.

Threats to Local Water Supplies

In rural areas such as Parkes, many residents rely solely on rainwater tanks for both household and farming needs. Airborne contaminants from EfW operations—such as acidic gases and particulates—can settle on rooftops and enter these tanks, jeopardising the purity of the only available drinking water source. There is a notable lack of research into how such emissions affect tank water quality in rural settings.

Economic Consequences for Property, Tourism, and Investment

Evidence from other regions shows that the presence of waste incinerators can negatively impact nearby property values due to both perceived and actual risks. Parkes is working to establish itself as a regional tourism and innovation hub, and an EfW

facility could undermine this vision. Potential investors—particularly those in clean industries—may be deterred by the presence of a high-risk industrial project.

Public Health Risks

A growing body of peer-reviewed research links EfW incineration with a range of health issues, including respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, and increased cancer risk. Vulnerable groups—children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions—are especially at risk. The long-term effects of low-level, chronic exposure remain poorly understood, and the precautionary principle should guide decision-making.

Environmental Harm and Damage to Cultural Heritage

The possibility of land and water contamination threatens local ecosystems and areas of cultural and spiritual importance. These environments—some of which hold significance to the Traditional Custodians of Wiradjuri Country—could be irreparably harmed by emissions, noise, and increased industrial activity. Cultural heritage assessments must be rigorous and led in consultation with Indigenous communities.

Misrepresentation and Lack of Independent Research

Portraying EfW as a clean or renewable energy source is misleading. At its core, it is a combustion process that releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Much of the supporting information comes from industry-funded sources, which raises serious concerns about impartiality and transparency. Community engagement materials often gloss over potential harms while exaggerating benefits.

Regulatory Oversight and the EPA's Capacity

Although the EPA has a key role in regulating facilities like this, its capacity to proactively monitor and respond to issues—especially in regional areas—is limited. Past incidents have shown that enforcement is often reactive and under-resourced. The people of Parkes deserve reliable protection, not promises that may not be backed by effective oversight.

Lack of Social Licence and Authentic Community Engagement

There has been an evident lack of open and inclusive consultation with the local community regarding this proposal. Many residents have not been properly informed or given a fair opportunity to express their views. Without broad community support—a social licence—the project lacks legitimacy and should not proceed.

Mental Health and Community Impacts

The anxiety, stress, and uncertainty generated by the proposal have already affected the mental wellbeing of local residents. Living in proximity to a facility perceived as high-risk

can contribute to long-term psychological distress, especially when trust in decision-makers and industry proponents is low.

Undermining Waste Reduction and Circular Economy Goals

EfW facilities require a consistent supply of combustible waste, much of which could otherwise be recycled, composted, or avoided entirely. This reliance contradicts the NSW waste hierarchy and could lock councils into long-term contracts that disincentivise investment in circular economy initiatives.

Local Nuisances: Odour, Noise, and Vermin

Communities living near similar incinerators have reported persistent issues with foul odours, increased noise levels, and infestations of pests and flies. These nuisances degrade quality of life and are often minimised in environmental impact statements.

Transport-Related Emissions and Regional Burden

To meet feedstock demands, waste will likely be transported from urban areas to Parkes, increasing heavy vehicle traffic, greenhouse gas emissions, road wear, and the risk of spills or accidents. Regional towns should not bear the environmental cost of waste generated elsewhere.

Uncertainty Around Waste Feedstock and Facility Transparency

There is insufficient clarity around what types of waste will be incinerated. Without strict, enforceable restrictions, materials such as plastics, e-waste, batteries, and hazardous substances could be included in the feedstock. The public has a right to full transparency and independent monitoring to ensure safety.

In Summary

Given the extensive risks and unanswered questions, I urge the NSW Parliament and relevant authorities to:

- **Suspend all approvals** until a full, independent assessment is conducted;
- **Ensure meaningful and transparent community consultation** takes place;
- **Focus on genuine zero-waste solutions** such as reuse, recycling, and composting infrastructure;
- **Apply the precautionary principle**, especially where scientific uncertainty exists.

The people of Parkes and the surrounding region deserve clean air, safe drinking water, and a healthy environment—not to be burdened by a project that may cause long-term and irreversible harm.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,
Kerrie Plummer

26 September 2025