Submission
No 173

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 29 October 2025

Submission to the Select Committee on proposed Energy from Waste Facilities

I am the daughter of a fourth generation Parkes farmer and grazier, who after three decades living in cities – including Sydney - has returned this year to live at the family farm. I'm extremely concerned about the proposed waste to energy incinerator with its risks of contamination of soil, water and the resulting impact on food production and the health of the community.

I'm also extremely disappointed that a small town in rural NSW is being used to solve a human made waste problem originating from the State's largest and richest urban population. This unjustly shifts risks and harms.

I'm writing to express my opposition to the proposed Waste to Energy incinerator at Parkes.

1. TOR (a) Performance of technologies

Studies of the pollutants from Waste incinerations, whether old technology or new, are unable to show that they are perfectly safe. There is not enough compelling research to justify the claims of safety. If the technology is completely safe, why ban it from selected parts of the state?

What can be demonstrated in the controlled environment of a laboratory is not the same as a largescale commercial operation which will inevitably malfunction, deteriorate over time, is subject to human error and experience the challenges of seasonal weather variations and natural disasters.

What confidence can we have that an international for-profit corporation could or would construct a failsafe incinerator operation with the welfare of the local inhabitants and environment as its priority?

If the technology is completely safe, why ban it from Sydney?

2. TOR (b) spread of emissions predicted and the quality of emissions to be generated.

and (d) impacts on human health – water and soil contamination

The International Stockholm Convention states that Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)are a serious global threat to human health and environmental ecosystems. [1]

The proposed incinerator is in proximity to the population of a town – that includes six schools, pre-schools and childcare sites, a hospital, several aged-care homes and a retirement village, sites of business and employment, and homes. As well as this, it is nearby to areas of backyard food production- fruit, vegetables and eggs, and homes dependent on rainwater tanks for their drinking water. It is also in direct proximity to a cereals farm.

If the emissions from the incinerator were to enter the food chain the health impacts could be significant and ongoing. These effects are cumulative, with impacts developing over many years. Adverse health outcomes impact not only the individuals themselves but their families and communities and comes with a public cost via the health system.

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[1] Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) https://www.pops.int/ Accessed 25/10/2025; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants 7 April 2025 IISD, Earth Negotiations Bulletin https://enb.iisd.org/articles/Stockholm-convention

What guarantees do we have that the emissions from a waste incinerator will not have any short or longterm health impacts?

3. TOR (e) the impact on agriculture locally and across the wider region.

Australian food production is estimated by the CSIRO to be worth $800 billion, feeding ten million people in Australia and worldwide[2]. Food must be safe to consume.

“The health impacts of waste incineration a systematic review” P W Tait et al [3] noted that research has identified a range adverse health effects – and that in the studies reviewed - dietary ingestion was consistently the largest route for toxic emission exposure.

The potential for irreparable and cumulative pollution impacts on local production of wheat, oats, canola, barley, beef, lamb, pork is very worrying.

Irreversible contamination of farms and their produce would destroy the livelihoods of farmers and their families as well as badly impact the downstream industries that depend on them. The whole town will bear the cost if our local farmers are put out of production.

Farming is already a challenging and unpredictable occupation requiring constant vigilance and labour and risk management – and that’s just dealing with the weather! Adding avoidable pollution risks will be very demoralising. There is also risk that any reports of food production contamination at the farm would have a very undesirable impact on all Australian farmers by association. Farming is not an optional extra industry for Australia – the nation needs to eat, and food grown in the Parkes area reaches consumers outside this district.

4. TOR (i) Alternative solutions to reduce and manage was produced by Greater Sydney

There is a clear lack of viable alternative solutions for Sydney residents when it comes to placing their waste in the domestic red bin.

Having lived in Sydney for the last 19 years, I know that the largest proportion of my own domestic waste was plastics, and these were both the most difficult to avoid when purchasing food as well as the most difficult dispose of responsibly.

It’s wrong to assume that residents of Sydney have no appetite for responsibly managing their own waste. They are constrained by the options available to them. The fact that Redcycle was able to amass such a large volume of plastics supports this – individual households do want to make a difference to the good management of the environment.

Greater investment is needed in the reduction of plastic waste at its source. If its disposal is so problematic, why is it permitted to be created? Its manufacturers must be part of the solution.

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[2] CSIRO News Release 2 June 2025 . https://www.csiro.au/en/news/all/news/2025/june/first-national-stocktake-of-australias-food-system-reveals-hidden-costs-and-big-opportunities Accessed 25/10/2025

[3] Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health Vol 11 Issue 1 Feb 2020 p 40-48 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S132602002300732X?via%3Dihub

The NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001 Section 3, hierarchy of resource management prioritises *avoidance and reduction of waste.* Constructing an incinerator which depends on the continued supply of waste is at odds with this.

The mind boggles at the potential transport costs alone and the energy consumed in "trash miles" to move the waste to Parkes. The production of electricity as a byproduct does not convert this incineration into a sustainable activity

If there is always a place for waste to be incinerated, what is the incentive to avoid or reduce the generation of waste?

What will happen to the residual toxic ash from the incineration process? The company that creates this ash cannot be permitted to pass the responsibility for this waste problem back to the people of Parkes or to NSW taxpayers. Nor can they depend on another company or industry to solve the problem at some future time.

This is exactly the mindset of manufactures of the plastics that are the cause of the whole issue. Poor thinking of policy makers has allowed the creation of Sydney's waste problem – which did not happen overnight.

Conclusion

The logic of transporting thousands of tonnes of waste hundreds of kilometres through both residential areas and countryside used for food production, in order to be burned in a 24/7 incinerator, creating air pollutants and toxic residual ash requiring further processing (and likely transporting) is flawed.

Please prioritise the health and safety of NSW residents, the protection of our food production land and clean water.

Please address the issues of waste production from the time of its manufacture and provide viable recycling options.

Please reject the proposed construction of a Waste-to-energy incineration plants in Parkes or anywhere else NSW.

Submitted by:

Date: 29 October 2025