Submission No 214

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Organisation: Condobolin Local Aboriginal Land Council

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Submission to the Inquiry on the Proposed Parkes Energy from Waste Facility
Submitted by: Condobolin Local Aboriginal Land Council

(CLALC) Location: Condobolin, Wiradjuri Country, with Parkes Shire

Region Date: 27 October 2025

1. Introduction

The Condobolin Local Aboriginal Land Council (CLALC) provides this submission to the Inquiry into the proposed Parkes Energy from Waste (EfW) Facility.

As a Aboriginal member based representative body for the local Aboriginal people, that was formed, like many others within NSW, under the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. The formation of Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC's) was part of a broader movement for Aboriginal people to gain land rights, and operate in a wider network with each other, overseen by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC). Our main roles are land and cultural heritage protection, including managing returned lands, protecting heritage sites and preserving history and culture, sites, places and stories.

The CLALC, the traditional Wiradjuri Custodians/community/kinship connections, in the Condobolin and our LALC service region, are expressing serious and distressing concerns about the cultural, environmental, health, and social impacts of this project on our Wiradjuri community and the broader Parkes Shire region, and subsequent neighbouring Shires and regions.

The CLALC works to protect and promote the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people in its region — a responsibility mandated under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW). This role includes managing cultural assets on our land and advising on the protection of heritage sites across our service area.

CLALC regularly collaborates with government and industry to ensure that local Aboriginal knowledge, customs, and lores are considered in land and environmental matters, especially in areas of cultural importance. However, in this instance, there has been no consultation, engagement, or courtesy shown to the CLALC or the Wiradjuri people by the Government, EPA, or the Parkes Shire Council.

Our Land Council has a statutory and moral responsibility to protect the interests, cultural heritage, and aspirations of Aboriginal people within our area. The proposed

EfW facility presents significant risks to our Country, community wellbeing, cultural values and our Songlines.

2. Lack of Consultation and Cultural Exclusion

CLALC are deeply concerned that meaningful consultation has not occurred with us, nor the local traditional Condobolin Wiradjuri custodians and Condobolin community in relation to this proposal.

Despite being a key Aboriginal stakeholder and the local representative body under NSW law, CLALC and our local Wiradjuri traditional custodians have not been engaged in consultation, planning, assessment, or any decision-making processes associated with the Parkes EfW facility by the proponent, NSW Government or Parkes Shire Council.

This omission represents a clear failure of procedural fairness and cultural respect by the Government, EPA, and Parkes Shire Council. Consultation to date has not met the standards of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and Government policies and strategies in Community and Cultural protocols of engaging with Aboriginal people.

True consultation must be ongoing, transparent, and allow time for informed community deliberation. Anything less continues the long history of decisions being made about our people, rather than with us.

CLALC strongly asserts that no cultural or environmental decision affecting Wiradjuri Country should proceed without genuine consultation and consent from the rightful Custodians of the land, the CLALC and communities, where we can open and honestly attest that this has definitely not happened.

3. Risks to Culturally Significant Areas and Wiradjuri Heritage

The proposed site lies within Wiradjuri Country, encompassing landscapes and waterways of great cultural and spiritual significance, including the Bogan and Lachlan River systems. These waterways sustain life, carry stories, and connect communities across Condobolin, Parkes, Condobolin, Forbes, and Wellington. In addition to the river systems, creeks alike are also significant, with Goobang Creek positioned behind the proposed site.

If the EfW facility proceeds, it risks:

• Disturbing or destroying culturally significant sites or landscapes with ancestral and totemic importance.

• Polluting water systems and soils that support traditional food, medicine, and cultural practices, including native plants.
• Disrupting the spiritual relationship with Country, which is foundational to Wiradjuri law, culture, and our identity.

Wiradjuri culture is inseparable from the health of Country. Any harm to the environment is also harm to our cultural wellbeing, our identity, and our continuity of culture.

4. Environmental, Health, and Social Risks

CLALC shares the community's deep concerns about the environmental and health implications of the proposed EfW facility.

Key risks include:
• Air pollution and toxic emissions that threaten families, farms, and native wildlife.
• Water contamination, posing particular risk for rural residents and communities relying on tank or bore water.
• Soil degradation and biodiversity loss, which could impact traditional foods, bush medicines, and local Wiradjuri totemic species.
• Noise, odour, and increased truck movements, negatively affecting community amenity and wellbeing.

The potential mental health impacts from ongoing fear, uncertainty, and environmental degradation are significant, particularly for Aboriginal families who have already experienced generations of dispossession and environmental harm.

5. Economic and Equity Concerns

The proposed EfW facility raises significant questions of equity and environmental justice.

Regional and Aboriginal communities like Condobolin, Parkes, affecting other surrounding communities, are being asked to manage Sydney's metropolitan waste, even though similar projects are prohibited elsewhere in NSW due to health risks. This places an unfair burden on smaller rural towns with limited capacity to respond to or recover from environmental damage. This will be devastating to our Aboriginal heritage, our sites and places that are irreplaceable and are beyond price for us as a LALC and for our people.

Additionally:
• The project could harm local agriculture, affecting soil health, livestock, and produce.

• Property values and tourism appeal may decline, reduces economic confidence in the region.
• Without dedicated measures, Aboriginal people will not share in economic benefits, such as employment, training, or procurement opportunities.

CLALC urges decision-makers to consider equity, fairness, and cultural responsibility in assessing this project's justification. We also asked at the start of 2025 when the LALC were invited for a meeting, which turned out to be the 1 and only meeting, that the CLALC needed to be consulted, engaged with and it was necessary for us to have a seat at the table, in all stages to be informed, decision- making and for Parkes Shire and the proponents' transparency. This was and continues to be ignored.

6. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Impacts

The proposal has already caused distress and anxiety within the Wiradjuri community. Many residents feel excluded, powerless, and fearful of further harm to their land and way of life, their health to themselves and families.

The land identified for the proposed facility sits directly across Country that encompasses our Songlines of our local Condobolin Wiradjuri Traditional Custodians. These Songlines represent our ancestral pathways, law, stories, customs, and spiritual obligations. They connect sacred sites, watercourses, and ceremonial places across the region.

Any disturbance to this landscape — whether through construction, emissions, or visual and ecological change — will cause irreversible damage to our ongoing stories, history, cultural identity, and spiritual practices. For Wiradjuri people, impacts are not only physical but also spiritual and emotional. The thought of an incinerator operating on or near our Songlines causes deep grief and concern for the wellbeing of our ancestors, our children, and future generations.

There is more than enough evidence to show that the proposed facility has potential harm to our Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, specific to our Songlines that are a significant component of our identity, the local Bogan River families, and our people from the surrounding communities. These songlines have been passed down through stories, vital knowledge on country, people, ceremonies and contain information on the landscape and the pathways our people took in their journey throughout our local and wider Wiradjuri Country. These songlines are oral maps and libraries of knowledge from our Elders, and old people who are the knowledge holders, and the keepers of our stories. They contain Lores – Cultural, Spiritual, environmental knowledge, geographic and even astronomical lores.

In the Parkes Special Activation Precinct Urban Design and Landscape Plan (2021) and the further Aboriginal Due Diligence Assessment carried out in 2021 (OzArk), there was an identified "No Go Zone" which refers to an area around an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage site that **must not** be disturbed or developed. It is a protected exclusion area set up around an identified Aboriginal heritage site where **no work, development, or disturbance is allowed –** although subject to the establishment of a 10-metre no-go zone buffer surrounding the site. This is not acceptable to us as a LALC and the local Wiradjuri people. All recommendations that are interpreted from the Urban Design and Landscape Plan, Structure Plan and Aboriginal Planning Principles do not exercise our voice, our self-determination and decision making as local custodians of Wiradjuri.

7. Recommendations

CLALC respectfully calls on the Inquiry to:

1. Reject the Parkes Energy from Waste project.
2. Ensure all consultation processes moving forward adhere to governing principles where CLALC and local Wiradjuri custodians are engaged with and informed at all levels.
3. Establishment of an Independent Aboriginal Advisory Group (which includes CLALC and Bogan River Traditional Owners) to oversee cultural heritage protection, consultation, and environmental monitoring, for this project and others within the CLALC's service area, and with Parkes Shire Council.
4. Commission independent health, cultural and environmental studies, free from industry influence, to assess short- and long-term risks.
5. Redirect investment toward sustainable waste management alternatives, including reduction, reuse, recycling, and non-combustion technologies.
6. Develop a local employment, training, and procurement framework prioritising Aboriginal community participation and benefit.

8. Conclusion

The Condobolin Local Aboriginal Land Council strongly opposes the Parkes Energy from Waste facility due to unacceptable cultural, environmental, and social risks.

Wiradjuri people have cared for this Country for thousands of years. We call on government to respect our cultural authority, protect our heritage, and work in genuine partnership to ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable future for all communities within the Condobolin and Parkes Shire region .

Yindyamarra — respect, gentleness, and honour — must guide every decision made on Wiradjuri Country.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.