Submission No 247

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Organisation: Andell Ag.

Date Received: 30 October 2025

Re: Submission from Andell Ag & Fitzpatrick Contract Harvesting – Inquiry into Proposed Energy-from-Waste Facilities in Regional NSW

I am writing this submission as the owner and operator of Andell Ag, a crop farming family-owned business located less than 10 kilometres from the proposed Energy-from-Waste (EfW) site within the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP), and Fitzpatrick Contract Harvesting, which provides agricultural contracting services across New South Wales and interstate.

I am a crop farmer, contractor, and father of two eight-year-old girls, and I strongly oppose this proposal due to the serious risks it poses to our health, land, and livelihoods. Both my family's income and the success of my business rely entirely on agriculture — from planting and spraying to harvesting for local and regional clients.

This submission addresses the Committee's Terms of Reference, specifically:

- (a) the performance and appropriateness of the proposed technology for the Parkes site;
- (b) the spread and quality of predicted emissions;
- (d) the impacts on human health, water, and soil;
- (e) the effects on agriculture and regional economies; and
- (f) the alterations to the Parkes Special Activation Precinct.

1. Proximity and Direct Risk

My farming property under Andell Ag is located less than 10 kilometres from the proposed Energy-from-Waste site. We are directly downwind of the facility's location, which means that any emissions, odours, ash, or particulate fallout will inevitably drift across our farmland and into the surrounding catchment.

This is not an abstract or distant concern, it is a direct and measurable threat to the productivity, safety, and value of our property. On a working crop farm, even small amounts of airborne contaminants such as heavy metals, dioxins, or micro-particulates can settle on crops, pasture, and topsoil, altering soil chemistry and reducing yields over time. Deposits of ash or dust can damage plant leaves, interfere with pollination, and affect grain quality at harvest. If these emissions enter our rainwater collection systems or local drainage lines, they could compromise on-farm water supplies used for spraying and stock, creating long-term contamination that is difficult and costly to detect or reverse.

Beyond the physical effects, any perception that produce from this region might be contaminated would create market stigma, damaging the reputation of Parkes-grown grain and feed products. This risk extends to neighbouring livestock producers if contaminated dust or fodder enters the feed chain.

The value of agricultural land and the confidence of potential buyers or financiers would inevitably decline if the area becomes associated with industrial pollution. The land I have invested in and worked for years could become devalued, harder to insure, and potentially unsaleable, with no clear accountability if contamination is proven later.

For a business like mine which depends on clean soil, water, and air to operate machinery, grow crops, and contract harvest for other farms, the proposed facility represents a real and unacceptable threat to agricultural productivity and financial security.

2. Agricultural Contracting Impacts

Through Fitzpatrick Contract Harvesting, I provide essential agricultural contracting services; including spraying, sowing, and harvesting for farms across New South Wales and interstate. Our business works on a seasonal cycle, often travelling hundreds of kilometres to support cropping operations in other regions eg. Walgett and Dirranbandi. The success of this work depends entirely on trust, reliability, and reputation within the agricultural community.

If the proposed Energy-from-Waste facility proceeds, the stigma of being based near an industrial waste incinerator will severely undermine that reputation. Farmers who engage our services expect their contractors to operate from clean, uncontaminated environments, where machinery and equipment are not exposed to harmful residues or dust. Even a perception that our machinery, trucks, or grain-handling gear could be contaminated by emissions, ash, or odour would be enough for many clients particularly those supplying export or organic markets to look elsewhere.

Beyond reputational damage, the facility poses operational and financial risks.

- If particulate matter or corrosive residues settle on machinery or stored equipment, it could damage sensitive components, increase maintenance costs, and reduce machinery lifespan.
- Should contamination enter harvested grain or hay through dust or airborne fallout, my business could be held liable for product rejection or loss, even without fault.
- Additional requirements for cleaning or decontamination before moving between farms or across state borders would increase overheads, reduce efficiency, and erode the viability of the contracting business.

The flow-on effects would be felt across the wider community. Contract harvesters support local fuel suppliers, mechanics, parts stores, accommodation providers, and transport operators. If contractors are forced to relocate or scale back due to loss of confidence in Parkes as a clean agricultural hub, it will ripple through the regional economy, affecting employment and local business turnover.

For a business built entirely on agricultural reliability, the introduction of a large-scale waste incinerator nearby represents an unacceptable and unnecessary risk, one that offers no benefit to those who produce the food and fibre sustaining our region.

3. Unsorted Waste and Unreliable Emissions Data

The proposed Energy-from-Waste (EfW) project relies on unsorted waste transported from Sydney and other urban areas. This means the waste stream will contain a constantly changing mix of materials, including; plastics, treated timbers, metals, household chemicals, and industrial residues.

When waste is not pre-sorted, there is no accurate way to determine what is being burned at any given time. This makes it impossible to produce reliable data on what pollutants will be released into the air, water, and surrounding environment. Even small variations in waste composition can

dramatically alter emissions, generating dioxins, furans, heavy metals (like lead, mercury, and cadmium), and ultra-fine particulates, all of which can travel long distances and settle on farmland.

Recently, there have been multiple incidents of garbage trucks exploding or catching fire due to batteries, gas cylinders, and other hazardous materials being incorrectly placed in household rubbish bins. If such accidents are already occurring within local waste collection systems, how can the Government guarantee safety when this same unsorted rubbish will be transported hundreds of kilometres by rail to Parkes? The potential for fires, explosions, and toxic spills during transport adds yet another level of risk to regional communities and emergency services.

Any Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on hypothetical waste compositions is therefore not credible or scientifically defensible. Without continuous, independent and realtime monitoring of the actual feedstock and combustion outputs, the modelling used in the EIS amounts to a theoretical exercise rather than an evidence-based assessment.

From a farmer's perspective, this uncertainty is unacceptable. How can any authority or operator guarantee safety when they cannot even define the contents of what will be burned? Once contaminants enter the environment through airborne particles, water runoff, or residue in ash, they cannot be easily contained or reversed. These pollutants may accumulate in soils, pasture, and grain, ultimately entering the food chain and posing a long-term risk to livestock, crops, and human health.

If emissions cannot be accurately quantified, then assurances of "world-class technology" or "best-practice safety standards" are meaningless. An EIS built on speculation is not a safeguard, it is a guess, and one that gambles with regional communities' health and livelihoods.

4. Risks to Health, Family, and Community

As a father of two eight-year-old girls, my greatest concern is the long-term impact this facility could have on the health of local families and children. We chose to live and raise our family on the land because of the clean air, open space, and safety that regional life provides. The proposed incinerator threatens all of that.

Studies from comparable waste-to-energy facilities overseas have shown that incineration can release fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and smaller), as well as dioxins, heavy metals, and other persistent organic pollutants known to cause respiratory issues, developmental problems, and increased cancer risk when exposure occurs over time. Children are particularly vulnerable, as their lungs and immune systems are still developing and they spend more time outdoors.

In a town like Parkes, prevailing winds regularly carry dust and smoke across long distances. Any emissions from this facility would not stay confined within its boundary fence. They could drift over homes, schools, sporting fields, and farms, the very places where our children live, learn, and play. The risk isn't limited to air quality; contaminants can also settle on soil and rooftops, entering rainwater tanks or being absorbed by garden produce and livestock feed.

Emergency incidents are another concern. If waste shipments catch fire or the facility malfunctions, the community could be exposed to acute toxic smoke events similar to those seen at industrial fires in other parts of Australia. Local volunteer emergency services are not equipped for hazardous chemical events of this scale.

Beyond the physical health risks, the psychological effects must also be recognised.
The knowledge that your home, school, and community sit beside a waste-burning plant creates constant anxiety, stress, and mistrust. Families who moved to Parkes for a safe rural lifestyle will feel trapped between staying to protect their farms and leaving to protect their children.

If this technology is truly as safe as claimed, it should be built where the waste is produced. in Sydney, not next to regional families who depend on clean air, water, and soil for their livelihood. To place this burden on a small regional town is unjust, unsafe, and morally wrong.

5. Contradiction of the SAP's Purpose

The Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP) was established with the promise of creating a "Clean Tech" and "Circular Economy" hub, a model intended to attract sustainable, innovative industries that would future-proof our region. As residents, we were told the SAP would bring opportunities aligned with renewable energy, recycling innovation, advanced manufacturing, and low-emission industries, developments that would complement agriculture, not threaten it.

The inclusion of an Energy-from-Waste incinerator directly contradicts that commitment.
There is nothing "clean" or "circular" about importing and burning hundreds of thousands of tonnes of Sydney's waste. Rather than re-using or repurposing resources, this process destroys materials and releases pollutants, undermining the very principles the SAP was meant to stand for.

By rebranding an incinerator as a "recovery" or "renewable" facility, the proponents are engaging in greenwashing, an attempt to disguise an environmentally damaging process under the language of sustainability. This deception risks eroding community trust and tarnishing Parkes' reputation nationally and internationally.

It also jeopardises future investment. Businesses genuinely seeking to establish clean-tech or agri-innovation projects are unlikely to co-locate beside a waste-burning plant. Investors who were attracted by the SAP's promise of environmental leadership will see this as a step backward, not forward. The long-term consequence is that Parkes could lose opportunities for authentic, job-creating industries in favour of one controversial, high-risk project that benefits no-one locally.

For those of us who supported the SAP in good faith, this feels like a broken promise.
The community expected a future built on innovation, sustainability, and regional pride, not one that turns Parkes into Sydney's waste depot.

I urge the Committee to hold the Government accountable to the original vision for the SAP and to ensure that any future developments align with its Clean Tech and Circular Economy objectives, rather than contradict them.

6. Economic and Industry Consequences

Both of my businesses, Andell Ag and Fitzpatrick Contract Harvesting, rely entirely on the strength, stability, and reputation of agriculture in this region. Like many others, our income depends on reliable seasons, healthy soil, and the confidence of grain buyers, transporters, and end markets who trust that Parkes produce is clean and safe.

The introduction of an Energy-from-Waste incinerator places that trust at risk. Even before a single truckload of waste arrives, the perception of pollution or contamination will immediately affect how Parkes is viewed by domestic and international buyers. In agriculture, reputation is everything and once it's lost, it's almost impossible to rebuild.

If this proposal proceeds, I expect to see:

- Falling land values for farms within and around the SAP zone due to perceived contamination risks;
- Reduced investor confidence in local agribusiness ventures and property development;
- Increased costs for insurance and compliance as risk ratings rise; and
- Declining demand for local produce if buyers, processors, or exporters begin avoiding the area.

For contracting businesses like mine, the ripple effects are even wider. A downturn in local farming confidence leads to fewer crops being planted, fewer harvesting jobs, and less spending across local fuel suppliers, mechanics, equipment dealers, and transport companies. This has a compounding effect across the community, from small family businesses to regional logistics and grain storage providers.

The Parkes economy is built on agriculture. When farming suffers, the entire town feels it, schools, small businesses, service industries, and local employment all take a hit. An incinerator that services Sydney's waste offers no meaningful benefit to our community, yet it introduces massive reputational and financial risk.

It is unacceptable that rural businesses like mine, which have invested decades of work into feeding this state, should now be forced to bear the economic fallout of a project designed purely to solve a metropolitan waste problem. Regional economies like Parkes should be strengthened by sustainable industry, not sacrificed as collateral.

7. Lack of Consultation and Community Consent

From the very beginning, there has been no genuine consultation with the people of Parkes, including farmers, business owners, and families who will live and work beside this proposed facility. Those of us most directly affected, the ones who rely on the land and air every single day, have been left out of the conversation entirely.

The process has been characterised by poor communication, a lack of transparency, and a sense that decisions were made long before the public was informed. Community members first learned of the proposal through media coverage and word of mouth, rather than from official consultation or government briefings. There were no open forums, no public meetings that allowed meaningful dialogue, and no opportunities for landholders to question or challenge the data being presented.

This failure of process has already caused significant division and mistrust within the community. Farmers who have built multi-generational businesses feel ignored, while local families feel betrayed by the Government agencies that were meant to represent them. The lack of consultation has also created fear and confusion, as residents are forced to rely on rumours and scattered information rather than clear, factual communication.

A project of this magnitude, one that could change the environmental and economic fabric of our town, must have social licence. That licence is earned, not assumed. To date, the Parkes community has not granted it.

True consultation requires early engagement, transparency, and respect for local knowledge. Instead, what we have seen is selective communication, community fatigue, and a sense that regional residents are being treated as an easy option because we live outside metropolitan boundaries.

Parkes deserves better. Our community has worked hard to build a strong agricultural identity and a reputation for collaboration and innovation. To impose a controversial industrial waste project without consent or proper consultation is not only unjust, it is a direct breach of public trust.

I call on the Committee to recognise that the process to date has failed to meet the standards of transparency, inclusivity, and fairness expected of government-led development, and that the proposal should not progress without the clear and informed support of the local community.

8. Lessons from Western Australia

Proponents of the Parkes Energy-from-Waste (EfW) project continue to use the Western Australian facility as an example of what the Parkes facility could be, promoting it as a benchmark for success and safety. However, the experience in Western Australia tells a very different story, one of persistent technical failures, community concern, and unmet promises.

The two WA facilities, located in Kwinana and Rockingham, were intended to demonstrate "world-class" EfW technology. Instead, they have faced significant operational, environmental, and social challenges, including:

- Major cost overruns and construction delays due to technical faults and design issues.
- Emissions exceedances and regulatory non-compliance during commissioning, despite being promoted as best-practice models.
- Community complaints regarding odour, dust, and constant noise pollution.
- Unresolved waste and ash disposal problems, contradicting the claim that these plants support a circular economy.

These issues prove that even with greater resources, metropolitan infrastructure, and access to technical expertise, the technology remains unreliable and high-risk. If these problems are occurring in industrial zones with strong oversight, how can anyone guarantee safety in Parkes. a regional, agriculture-based community with limited emergency capacity and far fewer resources?

The Western Australian plants are not success stories; they are ongoing warnings.
The repeated mechanical failures, emission breaches, and public backlash demonstrate that EfW incineration cannot be relied upon as a clean or sustainable waste solution. It is deeply misleading for proponents to hold up these projects as examples of what Parkes could achieve.

The NSW Government should be learning from those mistakes and pursuing modern, truly circular alternatives such as:

- Waste reduction at the source,
- Enhanced recycling and material recovery,

- Organic composting, and
- Regional innovation in bioenergy and reuse industries.

These are genuine clean-tech solutions that align with the original purpose of the Parkes Special Activation Precinct and that build local jobs without endangering the health, reputation, or safety of our community.

Conclusion

Rather than repeating the mistakes made elsewhere, New South Wales has the opportunity to lead with smarter, cleaner, and truly circular solutions. Communities like Parkes deserve industries that strengthen our region, not projects that put our land, livelihoods, and families at risk.

There are far more effective and sustainable ways to manage waste, including:

- Reducing waste at its source through improved packaging design and producer accountability;
- Advanced recycling and material recovery, keeping valuable resources in use rather than destroying them;
- Organic waste composting and anaerobic digestion, which safely convert food and green waste into renewable energy and soil nutrients; and
- Local innovation in recycling and re-use industries, creating stable regional employment and keeping economic value in NSW.

These are the kinds of initiatives that reflect the true intent of the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, a precinct built on clean technology, innovation, and opportunity, not industrial waste burning.

The proposed Energy-from-Waste facility is not a step toward progress; it is a step backwards. It threatens agriculture, undermines community trust, and shifts the environmental burden of Sydney's waste onto regional families who had no say in the decision.

Parkes has the potential to be a genuine leader in sustainable development, showcasing innovation that protects the environment, supports agriculture, and creates meaningful local jobs.
I urge the Committee to reject this proposal and to direct investment into authentic clean-tech solutions that uphold the principles of transparency, responsibility, and community wellbeing. Our community's message is simple: we want a clean, productive future for Parkes, not Sydney's waste.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission and for considering the concerns of our community. I trust that the Committee will give careful thought to the evidence and experiences shared by those who live and work in Parkes.

Yours sincerely,
Jeromie Fitzpatrick
Owner and Operator – *Andell Ag & Fitzpatrick Contract Harvesting*