Submission No 506

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Mrs Jenna Field

Date Received: 18 October 2025

To the Committee,

I am writing as a local farmer whose family has worked on the land near Parkes, New South Wales, for five generations. Our family grows grain and raises sheep for meat and wool, selling our products both within Australia and overseas. We care deeply about our land, our animals, and the future of our community.

I am strongly opposed to the proposal to construct a waste-to-energy (EfW) incinerator within the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP). This facility would burn rubbish transported from Sydney and would be located close to one of the paddocks we actively use for farming.

I am deeply concerned that the proposed plant poses serious risks to human health and the environment. Our family relies on rainwater collection for drinking and for watering our gardens. We also depend on clean soil to grow food and healthy pastures for our livestock. If harmful chemicals or emissions from the incinerator settle on our land, enter our water supply, or contaminate our soil, the effects could be devastating — not only for our health, but for our crops and animals as well.

There are no examples in Australia of a waste-to-energy facility being built so close to active farmland. No conclusive, long-term evidence has been provided to demonstrate that such a plant can operate safely in a regional, agricultural environment. Until that evidence exists, this proposal represents an unacceptable risk to our health and livelihoods.

This project also threatens the future of agriculture in Parkes and the surrounding districts. My children hope to continue farming here, but a waste incinerator burning Sydney's rubbish nearby jeopardises that future. It is not reasonable or credible to claim that such a facility would have no impact on farming operations. Even the perception of pollution could damage the reputation of local produce, lower land values, and discourage agricultural investment in the region.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has pointed to a waste-to-energy facility in Western Australia as a model. However, that plant is not situated near farmland. Parkes is. Our region's agricultural identity makes this project uniquely unsuitable and high-risk.

Our family has never supported the inclusion of our land within the Parkes SAP. Over many years, we have worked hard to purchase neighbouring farms to continue operating as a viable family business. We have made significant investments in infrastructure — including sheds and silos — based on the expectation that we could continue farming here for generations to come. Had we known the SAP would include plans for a waste incinerator or threaten compulsory land acquisition, we would never have made these investments. Losing part of our farm would destroy our ability to continue operating and could force us to sell everything. Relocating would be financially and emotionally devastating.

There is also a deep sense of inequity in how environmental decisions are being made and enforced in regional areas like Parkes. Many local residents have already lost confidence in the Environmental Protection Authority due to its poor handling of other pollution issues in our town. For example, ongoing odour problems from the Parkes pet food factory have been repeatedly reported to the EPA by community members, yet no effective action has been taken. This failure to address a long-standing and well-documented local issue raises serious questions about whether the EPA is capable or willing to protect our community from the far greater risks posed by a large-scale waste incinerator. If the EPA cannot manage odour complaints from an existing local facility, how can we trust it to safely regulate emissions and contamination from an industrial waste-burning plant? The community deserves fair and consistent protection — not to be treated as a testing ground for unproven technology.

The proposed waste-to-energy plant is not appropriate for a regional farming area. It presents unacceptable risks to human health, agricultural productivity, and community wellbeing. There is no proven example anywhere in Australia of this technology operating safely alongside farms. The inequitable decision-making process, combined with the community's lack of faith in the EPA's oversight, makes this proposal even more concerning.

I urge the Committee to reject this project and to prioritise the long-term health, safety, and sustainability of our region’s people, land, and agricultural future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.