Submission No 530

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Mrs Samantha Peters

Date Received: 22 October 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Submission to the Parliamentary Enquiry into Waste to Energy Facilities

I am writing to make a submission to the parliamentary enquiry into Waste to Energy facilities. As a concerned resident of Forbes – which research shows will be impacted by this Facility in a short amount of time if it were to be built in Parkes; as well as working in the Parkes community every day, I wish to raise serious concerns regarding the development, approval, and construction of a Waste to Energy Facility in my area especially, or anywhere in Australia for that matter.

The presence of this facility will add an extra burden to the already difficult situation people in the country face, that of attracting people who provide us with the vital services we need, including medical (especially doctors, nurses and midwives), educational and veterinarian. We also face the prospect of losing the people who are already here. Who would stay and live in area where there will be negative health consequences from air and water pollution over time, as has been well documented in overseas research and studies into these facilities.

I am particularly concerned with the lack of accurate information being made available to the community, the circulation of misinformation and the failure to meaningfully consult all affected communities including those from surrounding shires, such as Forbes, who have been given no opportunity to become involved in the consultation process.

While Waste to Energy facilities are often promoted as a sustainable solution to waste management and energy production, the reality on the ground—especially in communities where these facilities are proposed or operating—tells a different story. I would like to highlight the following key issues for the committee's consideration:

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1. Lack of Accurate Information and Circulation of Misinformation

There is a significant lack of accessible, accurate, and independently verified information about the impacts, risks, and long-term consequences of Waste to Energy facilities. In many cases, the information provided by proponents is overly technical, biased, or selectively presented, making it difficult for the public to make informed assessments.

Worse still, misinformation is often circulated in the community—sometimes unintentionally, and sometimes as part of campaigns to push projects through with minimal resistance. This misinformation includes accurate data about proposed emission amounts, employment opportunities within the shire all and the truth about the negligible amount of energy this facility will generate. This leads to confusion, erodes public trust in our governments and institutions , and polarises debate. Clear, transparent, and balanced communication from government and independent experts is essential to counter this and to allow for informed public participation.

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2. Lack of Meaningful Community Consultation

Many communities report that consultation efforts have been superficial, poorly timed, or purely procedural. Information sessions are often held after key decisions have already been made and this is the case in Parkes. Feedback mechanisms are limited or ignored. Local concerns—about health, food security, property values, air quality, and traffic—are frequently dismissed or left unaddressed or measures to assist the operation are pushed through without informing the community about the real reason the council wants changes – an example of this is Parkes Shire Council's push to lift road limits and usage in the shire to allow B-Doubles to come through.

For the consultation about this facility to be considered genuine by the community, it should have begun at the earliest stages of planning, been ongoing, and included real opportunities for community input that would have been able to influence project outcomes. Affected communities deserve more than tokenistic engagement.

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3. Environmental and Health Concerns

While Waste to Energy facilities are subject to emissions regulations, residents have legitimate concerns about air pollutants such as dioxins, heavy metals, and fine particulates, and the potential impacts on public health and local ecosystems and agricultural enterprises. The community also questions the ability of the government's Environmental Protection Agency to monitor air quality and harmful emission outputs with the vigilance that is required. They have failed communities in the past – the most recent being the lack of communication with the Broken Hill residents about the unacceptably high lead levels in the children within this community (2025). Not to mention the Environmental Protection Agen's failure to keep affected communities informed of the

contamination Belubula River catchment area from mining and other sources (2025) until recommending that the water from this catchment not be used for domestic purposes or eat fish caught from there (catch and release).

There is no requirement for daily or even regular long-term monitoring of this facility by the operators or independent organisations which you would think would be essential to ensure emissions are kept to a minimum and within government guidelines. The developers of this proposed facility are not required to begin base line data records of the air, soil and water contaminant levels around the facility until years after the facility is operational. The community questions this - if there is nothing for citizens to be concerned about why is this data not being collected from now and not waiting until after its been operating for a few years – when it will be too late? No mention has been made about how the data collected, including air quality and contamination will be able to be accessed by the community.

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4. Undermining of the Waste Hierarchy

Waste to Energy facilities should not displace or reduce efforts to minimise waste, recycle, or compost. However, there are concerns that long-term contracts and economic models behind these facilities incentivise the generation of residual waste, locking communities into outdated systems that work against circular economy principles – these facilities are not part of the circular economy because once waste is burnt it is gone from the system forever, leaving toxic ash that cannot be used anywhere. An audit of Sydney's household waste showed general waste bins still contain a significant amount of recyclable material, such as containers, paper, and cardboard. A notable portion of general waste is textiles, including wearable clothing that could be reused or donated. Batteries and e-waste are being incorrectly disposed of in general waste bins, posing a fire risk (think of tonnes of this rubbish being transported by train or truck through hundreds of communities, forests, native bushland and agricultural land – posing a huge risk for starting wildfires across the transport route. 2% of the general waste is garden and lawn waste, which should go in the organics bin instead of being lost to our ecosystem forever through incineration.

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5. Need for Stronger Oversight and Transparency

To go ahead legislated regulatory management is required to ensure that emissions, feedstock, safety standards, and community impacts are properly managed and reported. Oversight must come from independent bodies—not industry groups—and there must be accountability mechanisms when breaches occur.

Conclusion

I urge the committee to:

• Prioritise genuine community consultation in all Waste to Energy planning and approval processes;

• Recommend the establishment of independent information and advisory services to counter misinformation and improve public understanding;

• Strengthen regulatory oversight and public reporting requirements;

• Ensure Waste to Energy development aligns with Australia's waste hierarchy and environmental goals, not short-term convenience for governments and industrial interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I would welcome the chance to provide further input or to appear before the committee if required.

Yours faithfully,

Samantha Peters