

Submission
No 590

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Mrs Heather Lethbridge

Date Received: 28 October 2025

Partially
Confidential

To: Select Committee/ Members of Australian Parliament

From: Heather Lethbridge- Parent of three children at

Date: 28 October 2025

Re: Urgent concerns about the proposed Parkes "Clean Air Initiative"/ waste to energy incinerator

I write to request that Parliament require independent, science-based protections before any approval is given for the Parkes Incinerator sited adjacent to _____ and nearby agricultural land. My three children attend this school, and I am deeply concerned about both the short-term and long-term health, environmental and economic impacts on our community.

My key concerns include the following:

CHILDREN'S HEALTH and VULNERABILITY- Children breathe approximately 50% more air per kilogram of body weight than adults, meaning they absorb a higher dose of airborne pollutants relative to their size. Their lungs, brains, and immune systems are still developing, making them especially susceptible to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds emitted from incineration processes. Even "low" levels of exposure can trigger asthma, respiratory irritation, and reduced lung function. Studies of communities near incinerators and high traffic areas show increased school absenteeism, fatigue, and decreased academic performance linked to recurring respiratory systems.

AIR QUALITY & COMMUNITY WELLBEING- Combustion facilities emit particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, carbon monoxide, and odorous compounds that degrade air quality. Local wind patterns could carry emissions directly across the school grounds, exposing children during outdoor play, sport, and pick-up/drop-off areas.

Persistent contaminants can also accumulate in soil and animal tissue, which could potentially impact the livestock in the local area, as well as the animals that participate in our School Agricultural Program.

CUMULATIVE & LIFETIME RISK- The proposed site is within a mixed-use community containing homes, schools, and farms. Continuous low-level exposure from multiple sources increases lifetime health risk, particularly for children and pregnant women.

REQUESTED IMMEDIATE ACTIONS-

-Commission an independent, peer-reviewed Health Impact Assessment (HIA) that includes child-specific modelling of pollutant uptake, lung development, and school absenteeism risk.

-Require and fund independent baseline monitoring of soil, pasture, milk, meat and air quality before any construction begins, with PUBLIC RELEASE of results.

-Mandate protective buffer zones between the facility and schools, homes and farmland, applying the precautionary principle.

-Install continuous, independent emissions and ambient monitoring (real-time public reporting) with strict and enforceable penalties for exceedances.

-Prohibit land application of ash or residues near farmland unless proven safe by independent toxicological testing.

-Impose a moratorium on construction and commissioning until all independent assessments are complete and peer-reviewed.

In closing, Parkes is a family-based community. Placing an incinerator near a school and agricultural zone risks our children's health, educational outcomes, and local livelihoods. Because children inhale more air and absorb more pollutants, even short-term exposure can lead to increased illness, missed school days, and long-term developmental effects.

I urge Parliament to uphold the precautionary principle and require transparent, independent assessments to safeguard the wellbeing of our children, residents, animals and farmland. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Lethbridge