

**Submission
No 596**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

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Introduction

My name is Chris Auld and I have lived in Parkes for the past 47 years. Parkes has been a great place to live and raise my family and I am extremely proud to be a part of this vibrant community.

I am writing to express my deep concern about plans to commission Energy from Waste (EfW) plants across regional NSW with my submission focusing mainly on the Parkes proposal however my concerns extend to the other proposals on the 4 potential sites across the state.

I want to be clear, I am all for progress and I am aware of the need to attract new developments and industry to regional areas. There are a range of measurable positive outcomes attached to such developments.

Unfortunately I believe EfW brings with it a range of significant negative potential impacts which can't be overlooked in determining whether such facilities should be placed in close proximity to large regional communities such as Parkes.

My research suggests there was a proposal to establish an EfW facility in Western Sydney, however this plan was abandoned due largely to potential risks to both the population and environment.

Moving EfW facilities into regional areas demonstrates classic risk mitigation principles. Less people hence less risk. The people living in regional areas are no less important than people living in metropolitan areas.

Having worked in the energy sector for 39 years I understand the logistics of moving freight around and more importantly the carbon emissions attached to it. Moving large quantities of red bin waste long distances is counter productive and creates unnecessary emissions attached to the process.

In the case of Parkes the rail trip is in excess of 500kms. At a time when we are told governments must reduce carbon emissions this plan appears to be at odds with the policy frameworks being rolled by the NSW Government.

I welcome this inquiry and thank you for the opportunity to be a part of it.

TERMS of REFERENCE -B- Spread of Emissions

It is proven beyond any doubt pollutants are emitted from even the most modern EfW facilities with standard practice including emissions monitoring to ensure emissions are within set limits.

Persistent chemical compounds such as dioxins, furans, heavy metals and PFAS will exit EfW facilities. **These pollutants are known to be extremely toxic and likely to build up in the surrounding environment over time.**

Whilst EfW facilities may be equipped with the best available filtering and scrubbing equipment, pollutants still make it through this process. Escaping particles are likely to be extremely fine, typically less than 1 microns.

Small particles under 2.5 microns are considered the most harmful due to their ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. These particles have the ability to travel freely in the air and on prevailing winds and can cause a range of respiratory problems and lead to a range of potential health issues once absorbed by the body which include a range of cancers, neurological problems and even birth defects

Parkes is within 10kms of the proposed EfW facility, a distance with known negative human health impacts. **Why, after having travelled on trains for over 500kms, is the waste being unloaded and incinerated in such close proximity to major regional communities such as Parkes?**

As it stands currently there is no requirement for any large scale baseline testing, either by Government or Proponent. **Should EfW facilities go ahead anywhere in NSW I believe it should be a requirement for largescale baseline testing of the environment for the pollutants known to be emitted from these facilities.** This should then be followed up with regular testing with all results publicly available. Only then can communities and existing industry where EfW incinerators are proposed have confidence in what is being imposed on them moving forward.

TERMS OF REFERENCE -D- Impacts on Human Health

Incineration has a long list of negative health impacts on humans due to the emissions created. I initially found this report via the NSW Independent Planning Commission Website.

https://zerowasteoz.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Greenpeace_Incineration_HumanHealth.pdf

Incineration is known to have a range of adverse health effects on humans due to the persistent chemical compounds emitted. These are the same pollutants known to be emitted by modern EfW facilities. **While proponents lay claim to utilizing new technologies to capture more emissions and lessen human health impacts there are no long-term studies available to backup these claims.**

The emissions that will be created by any new EfW plant in NSW will contain dioxins, furans, heavy metals and PFAS. Emissions monitoring will be setup to ensure such pollutants are at certain levels.

These toxins are proven to have increased cancer rates, heart disease, respiratory conditions, congenital abnormalities and skin conditions

Escaping emissions are likely to be extremely fine, less than a micron. **This size is known to be extremely dangerous to humans, entering deep into the lungs and entering the bloodstream readily.**

The township of Parkes is situated less than 10km away, a proximity with proven negative effects of EfW incineration. Residents will likely be exposed to low levels of resulting emissions over the expected long life of EfW developments. The persistent nature of many of these emissions mean they would build up over time causing long term and irreversible damage to the population involved in such exposures. These exposures could be both via the air and rainwater. Emission particulates are likely to settle on roofs and end up in rainwater tanks after rain events. **Rural communities are extremely reliant on rainwater for domestic purposes, in many cases it is the only option available to residents.**

While the land at the Parkes site has now been rezoned in was agricultural land until quite recently after its acquisition by the NSW Government. The land adjoining and in extremely close proximity remains highly productive agricultural land, some of which is operated by multi generational farming families. Should emissions settle on land used for food production or on waterways or river systems there is a strong chance over time

contamination in agricultural commodities would reach detectable levels. **Should this occur these toxins and pollutants enter the human food chain and cause a human health risk far beyond the EfW region, impacting people across the country and around the world.**

TERMS OF REFERENCE -E- Impact on Agriculture

From my understanding agriculture has been a part of the Parkes economy since the region was settled. The land here is very productive and of a high value and the region forms a key part of Australia's food security.

Australian commodities are a trusted global brand and highly sought after. This is due to the strict regulation and market assurance programs adhered to by our farmers. There are also strong protections against other industries engaging in practices that have an adverse effect on Australian commodities. In setting up new industries, such as EfW, we must ensure existing industries are not adversely affected.

The NSW Chief Scientists Report on EfW says there is a need to avoid areas of food production. No buffer distance is recommended. **In setting up only 4 sites in NSW the NSW Government must complete comprehensive risk assessments to ensure agriculture is not adversely impacted by EfW facilities.** It is most definitely not for a proponent to prove safety to nearby food production areas as part of their application process.

TERMS of REFERENCE -i- Alternatives

Alternatives to plastics need to become more mainstream. Currently there are compostable packaging's available however this may come at an increased cost or require a change in packaging machinery type or methods. In the profits driven world of manufacturing and retail there is no incentive to move away from soft plastics. I'd like to see a plastics tax imposed on these packaging types that could be readily replaced with more environmentally friendly options to encourage change.

FOGO bins have been a revelation and we have seen an industry pop up that is value adding and creating a range of useful products and there is still more potential here.

I might add at this point **that one alternative to transporting urban waste hundreds of kilometers via rail to regionally based EfW facilities is to deal with the waste where it is produced and in turn reduce associated emissions.**