

**Submission
No 641**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

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I am writing to share my concerns and perspectives regarding the proposed Parkes Energy from Waste (EfW) project. While I appreciate the need to address growing waste management challenges, particularly in Greater Sydney, I believe the project presents significant risks to regional communities, the environment, and overall equity. My submission will highlight key issues, personal impacts, and alternative approaches that should be considered.

Key Issues with the Proposed Project:

Health and Safety Risks

The potential health impacts of emissions from the facility are deeply concerning. Parkes residents who rely on rainwater harvesting or town water could be exposed to contamination risks. While the proposed technology claims to be “state of the art,” there is limited evidence to demonstrate that it can eliminate all harmful pollutants. Lessons from older waste incineration facilities have shown increased risks of respiratory illnesses and other long-term health problems.

Environmental Concerns

The project poses risks to the local environment, including the possibility of air, water, and soil contamination. Parkes is a key agricultural hub, and any damage to its natural resources could jeopardise farming activities, food production, and the region’s broader economy. Additionally, the project may undermine existing efforts to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable practices in the community.

Regional Inequity

There is a troubling inequity in allowing such facilities to operate in regional areas like Parkes, Goulburn, Lithgow, and Richmond Valley while prohibiting them in other parts of NSW due to health concerns. This creates an unfair burden on regional communities, who are being asked to shoulder the risks associated with Sydney’s waste.

Economic and Social Impacts

The project could lead to declining property values, reduced investment, and damage to the reputation of Parkes as a clean and vibrant community. Many residents feel that the facility will negatively affect their quality of life, with increased anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

Inadequate Consultation

Community consultation around the project has been insufficient. Many locals feel excluded from the decision-making process and are concerned that their voices are not being heard. Transparent and inclusive consultation is essential for projects of this magnitude.

Personal Impact

As a local resident, I have already noticed the strain this project has placed on our community. There is a growing sense of unease about the potential health and environmental risks, and many people feel powerless in the face of such a large-scale initiative.

For my family, the project has heightened concerns about whether Parkes remains a safe and desirable place to live. If the project goes ahead, we may need to reconsider our long-term plans, including where we live and invest in our future.

Suggestions for Alternative Solutions

Rather than pursuing energy-from-waste incineration, I urge the government to consider alternative, more sustainable approaches to managing Sydney's waste. These include:

Strengthening Recycling and Waste Reduction Initiatives: Expanding and improving recycling programs, as well as promoting waste reduction through education and incentives.

Exploring Safer Technologies: Investigating cold energy-from-waste methods or other innovative solutions with minimal environmental and health risks.

Focusing on Localised Waste Solutions: Developing decentralised waste management systems that reduce the need for large-scale facilities.

These approaches would not only reduce risks to regional communities but also align with broader sustainability goals.

The Parkes Energy from Waste project raises serious concerns about health, environmental sustainability, and regional fairness. It is vital that these issues are addressed and that alternative solutions are explored. I strongly urge the Inquiry to prioritise projects that are equitable, safe, and sustainable, ensuring that regional communities like Parkes are not unfairly burdened with the consequences of Sydney's waste.