

Submission
No 636

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Parliamentary Inquiry into proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) Facilities in Regional NSW

As a lifelong resident of Parkes NSW along with my partner and our four young children, I am writing to express my deep opposition to the proposed Parkes Energy from Waste incinerator and associated waste facilities. My family lives here, my children attend the local schools and play sports in the surrounding towns, we plan to grow old in this community if it remains safe and liveable. This proposal threatens not only our health and environment, but also the integrity and future of our town.

Parkes is being positioned as a dumping ground for Sydney's red bin waste under the guise of "energy recovery." This is not an equitable plan. The Infrastructure Plan and regulations rightly prohibit such high-risk waste incineration projects in NSW metro areas due to known health risks, yet Parkes and a few other regional towns are being carved out as exceptions. Why is it acceptable to expose rural families, including my own, to risks deemed too dangerous for people in Sydney?

The consultation process has been poor, and social licence is completely lacking. Many in our community were not properly informed, and some still don't fully understand the scale of what is being proposed. The idea that this project has community backing is misleading there is a growing wave of opposition, especially among families like mine, who feel powerless but deeply worried. If they get this wrong it is a very high and possibly irreversible cost to the community therefore the burden of proof should be strong, and compensation or hard safeguards should match that risk.

The health risks associated with EfW incinerators are well documented, particularly the release of dioxins, heavy metals, and ultrafine particulates that cannot be fully filtered. The evidence base does not guarantee zero harm especially in a regional agricultural town where soil, water, farming, liveability and property are at risk. These pollutants pose serious threats to human health, especially developing children. My family, like many others here, rely on tank water for drinking, what happens when that water is contaminated by airborne toxins?

Access to healthcare is already a major concern for families living in Parkes. Like many regional areas, we've struggled for years to attract and retain doctors. Limited services, heavy workloads, professional isolation, and lifestyle trade-offs all make it difficult to convince medical professionals to settle here. The proposal to build a large-scale waste incinerator only makes this harder. If Parkes gains a reputation as a regional dumping ground or a place of potential environmental and health risk, how can we expect doctors to choose to live and work here? For families like mine and the business's tied to the health and growth of this town the long-term implications are serious. A project like this undermines not only our health confidence, but the future viability of basic services like healthcare, education and investment in the region.

We are a part of a thriving agricultural region. Introducing a high-volume industrial incinerator into our clean air environment puts our food supply and farming livelihoods at risk. Who will want to buy produce grown near a waste incinerator? The stigma alone can destroy reputations and ruin markets. Tourism and local investment will suffer when no one moves to or visits a town that burns garbage from cities hundreds of kilometres away.

My partner and I run a small building business in Parkes, and we're deeply concerned about the potential repercussions this project could have on our livelihood. Fewer people will want to move to or invest in a town that's being rebranded as a regional waste hub. Who wants to build a new home or start a family near an incinerator? We've already put future business investments on hold, and we've even had heartbreaking conversations about whether we might have to leave despite this being the only home our kids have ever known.

Our 12- & 11-year-old daughters recently asked us what the signs around town meant; the ones opposing the incinerator and what it might mean for their future. Coupled with conversations at school they are now worried about whether the air they breathe will be safe, and whether their friends might have to move away. It's hard to explain to a child why our community must bear the risks of other cities' waste, and why their home and safe place, is being put at risk. No child should have to carry that kind of worry.

Adding insult to injury is the greenwashing used to promote this project. Claims of "clean energy" and "climate solutions" are not only misleading, but they're also insulting to residents being asked to trade their health for corporate profit with no guarantee the community will receive any actual compensation; at best it has been proposed with no evidence that it is binding. We are being asked to accept significant risk without guaranteed, substantial returns.

Industry-funded studies, flashy advertising, and false comparisons to European models ignore the fact that burning waste undermines recycling efforts and does not belong in a circular economy, this locks in a linear waste model to take-make-burn instead of reuse-recycle-reduce. The effect is that future generations in the region inherit a system that diminishes resource value, rather than preserving it.

We want real solutions not band aids that shift Sydney's waste burden onto rural families. Investment should go into reducing waste at the source, strengthening recycling systems, and exploring safer alternatives like cold EfW technologies or regional composting and reuse programs.

The mental toll this proposal has already had on our community the stress, the uncertainty and the sense of betrayal is significant. We deserve better. Our children deserve better.

I urge the NSW Government, Parkes Shire Council, and all involved regulators to reject this proposal. Regional towns should not be the price paid for poor metropolitan waste management. Parkes is not Sydney's landfill. We are a community, not a sacrifice zone.

Sincerely,