

**Submission
No 698**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Miss Amelia Tanswell

Date Received: 30 October 2025

Dear Hon. Chair Overall and Hon. Members of the Committee,

Introduction

My name is Amelia Tanswell, and I was born and raised in Parkes. My family has owned and worked farmland in this area for generations. We have always produced our own meat, fruit and vegetables, and take pride in living sustainably on the land. I am a homeowner in Parkes and wish to express my strong opposition to the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility.

My concerns relate primarily to the risks this project poses to community health, agriculture, property values, and local business confidence.

1. Health and Environmental Risks

The Parkes community has been told that modern incineration technology is safe, but the reality is that burning waste, particularly plastics, produces pollutants such as dioxins, heavy metals, and fine particulate matter. These are well-documented carcinogens that cannot be completely eliminated, no matter how advanced the filtration systems. Once released, they settle into soil and water, entering the food chain and accumulating over time.

Parkes does not have the medical capacity to manage the potential long-term health impacts of these pollutants, nor should any regional town have to. The town already faces shortages in healthcare staff and limited access to specialist services. Exposing the community, including children and the elderly, to these risks is unacceptable.

If this technology is genuinely safe, it should be built where the waste is produced, within the Sydney Basin. Transferring Sydney's red-bin waste over 500 kilometres to Parkes contradicts the proximity principle under the Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014, which exists to prevent exactly this kind of long-distance waste transport and associated risk.

2. Impact on Agriculture

Parkes is one of regional NSW's key agricultural regions. The proposed site lies within the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, surrounded by productive farmland and essential community infrastructure. Agriculture is the foundation of the region's economy, supporting not only farmers but also machinery suppliers, transport operators, feed and fertiliser providers, and small businesses.

Any perception of contamination from emissions, ash, or runoff could have serious effects on agricultural markets. Buyers and consumers expect Australian produce to meet high environmental and health standards. Even the suggestion that local produce could be exposed to pollutants risks damaging the clean and green reputation that underpins both domestic and export markets.

3. Impact on Property Values and Local Businesses

As a local homeowner, I am also concerned about the effect this facility will have on property values and the overall appeal of Parkes. Large-scale industrial waste incineration would change the character of the town and make it a less attractive place to live, work, and invest.

Property values are likely to decline as potential buyers avoid areas near heavy industrial operations. Families and professionals who would otherwise consider moving to Parkes may look elsewhere, and existing residents could see the value of their homes fall.

The visual and reputational impact of an EfW plant will also affect local businesses, particularly in hospitality, retail, and tourism. Parkes' small business community relies on visitors, new residents, and a positive image of the town. The association with a waste-burning facility would deter investment and reduce economic activity, further compounding the social and financial risks to the community.

4. Lack of Independent and Transparent Assessment

Before Parkes was identified as a permissible site for an Energy from Waste facility, independent studies should have been completed to assess agricultural, health, environmental, and economic impacts. Many of the reports produced so far have been prepared by or for project proponents rather than independent experts.

A full and transparent assessment process should include local baseline studies, public health risk assessments, and modelling by independent third parties. The community deserves unbiased information and genuine consultation before a project of this scale is approved.

5. Regional Inequity and Policy Contradictions

The decision to allow Parkes to host an EfW facility highlights a broader issue of regional inequity. Similar facilities have been rejected in Sydney due to public health and environmental concerns, yet regional communities are now expected to accept the same risks.

Transporting hundreds of thousands of tonnes of waste from Sydney to Parkes undermines the intent of the waste hierarchy and the proximity principle. It shifts the problem rather than solving it. Regional residents have the same right to clean air, safe food, and environmental protection as those living in metropolitan areas.

Conclusion

The proposed Energy from Waste facility in Parkes, and other regional towns, poses significant and unnecessary risks to the health, economy, and environment of the community. It breaches the proximity principle, threatens agricultural integrity, risks property value decline, and undermines local business confidence.

Parkes has a proud history as a productive, sustainable regional centre. This project jeopardises that future. I respectfully urge the Committee to ensure that regional communities are given the same level of protection, transparency, and fairness as urban areas in decisions concerning waste management and environmental safety.

Yours sincerely,
Amelia Tanswell