Submission No 712

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 October 2025

I strongly oppose the proposed waste-to-energy incinerator in Parkes. Our region is proud farming country — known for its clean air and agricultural productivity. The introduction of an incinerator threatens the very environment, lifestyle, and culture that define Country Australia.

I live 11km from the proposed site, on land which I produce small amounts of cereal grains and livestock. The creek which also runs through my property is around 12km from the proposed site.

I work for a National Company, which has a branch in Parkes. The company i work for hires equipment to support these types of job sites during the construction and development stages. I have worked for the same company for the last 8 1/2 years supporting Parkes and surrounding towns during their growth.

I am a local of the area, born in Forbes and have lived in Parkes LGA or adjoining towns for the 40 years of my life. I have raised 2 children in this area whom the first born is currently at Wagga CSU studying Agriculture Science and my second born is off to university next year at Orange CSU to become a dentist. Both children wish to return to our area once they have completed their studies and support our local communities.

If this project goes ahead, we will sell and move to ensure the health and safety of our future generations as the local community and the leaders within it no longer support our way of life and the contributions, we make to not only our community but also our country.

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1. Environmental and Health Concerns

Despite assurances that emissions will be "safe," extensive international evidence shows that waste-to-energy plants release toxic pollutants — including dioxins, heavy metals, PFAS, and other persistent organic pollutants — which contaminate soil, crops, water, and livestock.

A 2023 ScienceDirect review found that people living near incinerators face higher risks of respiratory disease, congenital abnormalities, and certain cancers (ScienceDirect, 2023). Toxics Free Australia (2024) confirmed that ash from incinerators contains long-lasting chemicals that threaten both public health and agriculture. The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has also warned that "contamination of food and ingestion of pollutants from incineration is a significant risk pathway" (PHAA, Waste Incineration and Health Report).

Globally, these concerns are echoed by major research institutions:

• The IPEN Report (2023), "Waste Incineration Drives the Triple Planetary Crisis," found that incineration contributes to toxic pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss (IPEN.org).

• A study of 96 incinerators across China revealed measurable health risks from emissions and particulate fallout (ScienceDirect, 2024).

• PLOS Climate (2023) concluded that U.S. waste incinerators emit more greenhouse gases per kilowatt-hour than many fossil fuel sources, undermining clean-energy goals.

• A ClientEarth report (2022) found that incinerators across Europe contribute to higher local air-pollution burdens than landfills and discourage recycling efforts.

These findings directly contradict claims that waste-to-energy facilities are "clean" or "safe." The only acceptable exposure level for communities like ours is zero.

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2. Agricultural and Community Impact

Parkes and the surrounding shires are built on farming and regional tourism. Any release of dioxins or fine particulates can affect crop yields, animal health, and soil quality. Once airborne toxins settle, they can enter our waterways and food supply.

A NSW Government report (2022) on incinerator risks acknowledges that many health and ecological effects may take years to appear and persist long after the facility begins operation. This confirms that the long-term risks will be borne not by the waste producers in Sydney, but by regional communities like ours.

Our clean air, healthy land, and sustainable farms are worth far more than the short-term convenience of an urban waste solution.

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3. Smarter, Proven Alternatives

Rather than shifting the waste problem into rural Australia, the focus should be on reducing waste at the source, improving recycling, and creating smarter product-return systems.

Expanding Return and Earn to include more common containers — such as milk bottles, dog food cans, soup cans, and similar recyclable products — would dramatically reduce landfill volumes. These materials are already recyclable, yet excluded from the current system. Including them would create regional jobs, incentivise proper recycling, and reduce waste transportation costs — all without introducing new environmental hazards.

Internationally, dozens of cities are rejecting incineration altogether. Reuters (2024) reports that "hundreds of European cities are spurning incineration" in favour of circular, zero-waste systems. This approach aligns with modern sustainability standards and community values, unlike outdated, high-emission incinerator models.

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4. Protecting Our Country Values

We take pride in our fresh air, wide-open landscapes, and agricultural lifestyle. No amount of "safe limits" or corporate assurances can justify compromising these values. Clean air and soil are not luxuries — they are essential to our health, economy, and identity.

With clear evidence from both Australian and international research, it is undeniable that waste-to-energy incineration poses unacceptable risks to our region's environment, food systems, and long-term wellbeing.

I therefore reiterate my strong opposition to the proposed waste-to-energy incinerator in Parkes. Country Australia should not be expected to become a dumping ground for city waste. The solution is not to burn our future — it is to reduce, recycle, and return responsibly.

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📚 References

Australian Sources

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