

Submission
No 719

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

I am _____, 53 years of age and a proud Wiradjuri man, looking to relocate to the Parkes area. To enable this, I, along with my wife have purchased land with intent on moving to the region to prepare for and enjoy our retirement years.

My connection with the land and my heritage was long lost through my early years for many matters, including “the shame” of just being of Aboriginal origin, while some of these things have changed over time, I had always wondered why?

I had learned of my heritage some time ago and began to understand it, although there was always something else, something missing. More answers came over the years, but a missing piece was not forthcoming until my wife, who works in healthcare, lived in Forbes for most of 2021 to provide vital COVID testing to the area.

When the rest of us in Sydney were allowed to roam again, I often went up for the weekend. It was on my very first visit to Forbes that I had my answers, this area (I do note this relates to Forbes specifically) was “home”, my sense of being was right, the community was right, and in 2024 I was even able to meet up with lost family and further rekindled the love of the area. Although, after 2021, our mind was made, we wanted to live in this part of the world, and in 2022, we purchased land to fulfil this dream.

Even though this potential facility was already in the pipeline, it was not actively promoted, and we only became aware of this after the purchase of our land. I will note here that we would not have purchased land with even the remote prospect of a facility like this going up. Thankfully it is only land, we haven't started to build, which is better than others who have built, or are still building that will never live in their homes due to these plans.

Enough about me.

I will acknowledge that the waste issue for Sydney (and indeed many parts of not only Australia, but the rest of the world) needs to be managed, however this must be done in a manner that puts environmental health first and foremost, without any possible compromise to human, animal, and environmental health over the long term.

Firstly education, why aren't we educating people to manage their waste better? This is an issue that needs to be addressed. Why was it that “Green Bins” took so long to come to Parkes, or for example the Blacktown Council area in western Sydney where that only started being used in September of this year (2025), in my local council we have Green bins for far longer than I can remember, why wasn't this a statewide mandate back then, instead of only needing it in place by this year?

Parkes and surrounds have considerable agricultural presence, these proposed facilities (the EfW Incinerators) will place this at risk. None of the technologies have proposed ZERO emissions, and only that emission levels will be monitored, but little detail on how this will be done, or the transparency with which this information will be shared with the community. All we hear is “minimal emissions”, this is still an issue, these emissions will build up over time, and once it is polluted, that is it, dead country.

So, even with continual improvements to emission's levels, there is still an emission stream, and the dioxins contained within them don't go away, they build up, forever.

Similar proposals to the Parkes EfW have been knocked back due to community backlash and environmental concerns at both Matraville, and Eastern Creek. The EPA even banned these facilities in all of NSW aside from 4 (at the time) proposed Special Activation Precincts, of which Parkes is one of them. I do find it interesting that a region such as the Riverina was well away from these, considering the amount of produce grown in that area.

In all of this, I will acknowledge that Parkes is extremely well connected, being on the main western rail corridor, and facilitating much of the North – South transport as well.

NSW has many harsh regions which would benefit from projects like this, and people working there would be fully aware of the environmental concerns while onsite. Parkes could be used as a stabling yard of sorts and send the waste to the more remote facility, this will still provide extra employment in the Parkes area, allow the upgraded rail infrastructure to be used, and most importantly, would help to ease the environmental concerns I have raised, and that surely many others have. Although for extra consideration here, the volume of waste that would still pass through Parkes would need transportation and the initial proposed volume of 600,000 tonnes per year takes a lot of power to haul, with the future prospect of 1.2 million tonnes or maybe even more, that is a lot of diesel fuel in those trains. Then, given that volume, can it be 100% guaranteed safe, from explosive waste, such as batteries.

In the past Governments have even promoted regional areas to live in, and they are still actively encouraging in demand trades (including doctors, nurses) to relocate. And then they do this, dump a horrendous incinerator into the region to manage waste from out of the area – Good luck getting people to move if you (the State Government) play games like this.

I mentioned agricultural matters previously, that was more on the macro scale, however what about the small produce growers, backyard gardeners, restaurants with small gardens... What about those who have a few chooks? They eat scraps, and other items directly from the ground, I guess those dioxins will work their way into the eggs as well. Anything with 10-15 kms of a project like this is at high risk, and as far reaching as 150km is still at risk, as those emissions settle on, and then seep into the ground over the lifetime of the facility, and then stay, forever.

Further, how has the EPA decided that these areas are “safe” for these hazardous projects, while declaring them unsafe in others. If it is good for most of NSW to ban these, why Parkes? Is it because of the upgraded rail infrastructure? Is it close enough to Sydney to keep the cost of transporting it down? Why have the people of Parkes (and other Special Activation Precincts) been discriminated against by allowing these projects.

While all of this information is known, what happens in 20+ years when/if people start developing weird medical issues. People will start (or should start) getting regular medical checks, to have a baseline on their health, if things change and are directly attributable to an EfW facility, the Government will have many questions to answer. Think about the movie Erin Brockovich, while told through the Hollywood lens, the real-life crux of this case was hazardous waste getting into the environment – sounds pretty familiar to me, and if the risk is known up front, then the government will be liable, as this is a foreseeable outcome. If a lay person such as myself can foresee such an outcome, then I’m sure those more qualified would be able too. Is this a gamble that the NSW Government wants to take? You’re playing with people’s lives here.

I appreciate that we have a problem to address, and that more work needs to be done on securing a long term solution, however this must be done without any risk to the health of people, animals, and the environment.

Thank you