

**Submission
No 721**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

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Date Received: 31 October 2025

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Energy from Waste (EfW) Technology

From: Craig Tanswell,

30 October 2025

I wish to make this submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Energy from Waste (EfW) in the strongest possible terms of opposition to the proposed construction of an EfW incinerator in Parkes.

I am a fifth-generation farmer on our family property in the Parkes area. My wife also grew up locally, and our children attended schools in Parkes, played sport, and represented our town with pride. My mother and two brothers live in Parkes. Our roots in this region run deep, and like many local families, our lives are tied to the health of the land, the quality of our water, and the purity of the air we breathe.

Global Context – A Technology the World Is Moving Away From

While EfW may be promoted as “new technology” for Australia, it is not new internationally. In fact, there is a global movement away from waste incineration, largely because of the serious contamination issues it creates. Across Europe, the UK and Asia, governments and communities are shifting away from this technology.

From 2028, the European Union will include EfW in its Emissions Trading Scheme, forcing facilities to “pay to play” — a clear recognition that these facilities contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Other regions are focusing on circular economy principles — reduce, reuse, recycle — rather than burning valuable resources and polluting the environment.

It is extremely concerning that the NSW Government appears to be moving in the opposite direction, motivated by budgetary concerns, not the long-term health of the community and surrounding land.

Health and Environmental Risks

“State of the art” does not mean “clean” or “safe.” Parkes has experienced a particularly windy year, and emissions from such a facility — including dioxins, furans, PFAS, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), and heavy metals — will travel long distances before settling into soil and waterways. We have the Bogan, Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers within 100km of Parkes.

<https://zerowasteaustralia.org/incineration/incineration-and-air-toxics/#:~:text=The%20result%20is%20that%20most,regional%20level%20around%20individual%20incinerators.>

[https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-CED-PHE-EPE-19.4.4#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health%20Organization%20\(WHO\)%2C,source%20and%20can%20bioaccumulate%20in%20food%20chains.](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-CED-PHE-EPE-19.4.4#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health%20Organization%20(WHO)%2C,source%20and%20can%20bioaccumulate%20in%20food%20chains.)

I ask the Committee: Are current EPA standards fit for purpose for overseeing and policing EfW facilities? The EPA currently monitors approximately nine carcinogens, yet there are potentially over 1,000 harmful substances that could be released from an EfW incinerator. History has already taught us that substances once considered “safe” — asbestos, AFFF firefighting foam — have and are proving deadly.

Why is the NSW Government not applying the **precautionary principle** here?

I have no faith in the EPA to adequately police or protect the community from this facility, I’ll explain – our existing laws may well be inadequate and large multinational corporations have the money and resources to make it difficult to prosecute in a court of law.

Our farm relies on rainwater for household use and our vegetable garden, and our sheep, cattle, dogs and wildlife drink that same rainwater. Our beef and lamb feeds our family and staff and are sold through the Forbes Livestock Exchange. What happens when our only water source or land becomes contaminated by emissions settling from this proposed plant? And what compensation will be available to farming families if contamination is proven?

Lack of Baseline and Ongoing Environmental Testing

I hold grave concerns about the adequacy of environmental testing proposed for the site. There must be **comprehensive, independent baseline testing** conducted **before the first sod is turned**, including:

- Air quality (over a broad area)
- Water (surface, ground, process, and rainwater)
- Soil (both on-site and surrounding agricultural land)
- Human health near and long term

Ongoing monitoring must also be **frequent, transparent, and public**, not “a couple of times a year for an hour at a time” as has been suggested. It is very easy to make known inspections/testing meet acceptable parameters.

The ash produced by incineration must also be tested regularly, as it contains highly hazardous materials. This material cannot be safely repurposed. If the plan is to landfill the ash, we are simply **swapping one toxic waste problem for an even worse one**.

Economic and Community Impacts

The proposed EfW facility will not benefit Parkes:

- There will be **no long-term jobs** of significance — a handful of operational positions after construction ends.
- **Families will leave**, taking multiple generations and their businesses with them. I have personal knowledge of families who will leave should this project go ahead.
- **Perceived or actual air pollution** will damage Parkes’ reputation and make it harder to attract professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and tradespeople, which is already a difficult/almost impossible task. * I bring to your attention the non-operational Maternity Unit and Surgical Suite at Parkes Health Service, due to lack of qualified doctors, for a number of years.

This proposed project was not adequately discussed/debated in public and has somewhat “flown under the radar”, and the lack of for and against arguments. I feel **betrayed** by how this process has unfolded.

Alternatives and a Better Path Forward

If the NSW Government is genuinely committed to addressing waste responsibly and reducing emissions, the focus should be on:

- Reducing waste at the source
- Expanding recycling programs
- Encouraging reuse, repurposing, and upcycling
- Implementing “creator pays” schemes for plastic packaging
- Banning single-use plastics
- Expanding container deposit refund schemes

Plans for the eventual closure and remediation of any EfW site must be developed and made public from the outset, with contingencies for potential environmental harm.

A Question of Equity and Common Sense

If an EfW incinerator is **not safe for Sydney**, then it is **not safe for Parkes**. Transporting **600,000 tonnes of Sydney’s waste** over **500 kilometres by diesel train** to burn it in regional NSW is not a solution — it is blatant stupidity, whatever happened to the Proximity Principle? It will add to greenhouse emissions, threaten regional livelihoods due to train accidents, this is both possible and probable over time, over a greater distance and also possible leakage from train carriages.

This proposal puts at risk our **health, livelihoods, food security, and community wellbeing** — all to solve Sydney’s waste problem and serve multinational corporations that are losing market demand in the EU, UK and Asia.

Conclusion

Parkes and the surrounding region should not be a testing ground for waste incineration and contaminant monitoring in Australia. The **precautionary principle** must apply. Once contamination occurs, it cannot be undone.

I ask of the Committee to stop the NSW Govt from any further planning or construction on EfW incinerators until the outcomes of the Inquiry are addressed.

I urge the Committee to reject outright the Parkes EfW proposal and instead, champion sustainable, forward-thinking waste solutions that protect regional communities, our agricultural industries, the environment we depend on and perhaps our very lives.

Sincerely,

Craig Tanswell – Farmer & grazier