Submission No 775

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 October 2025

Partially Confidential

From:
Age: 62
Location: Forbes, NSW (Wiradjuri Country)

Introduction

My name is , a 62-year-old proud Wiradjuri man, born and bred in Condobolin and now living in Forbes on Wiradjuri Country with my wife. Together, we have seven children and twelve grandchildren.

I am the Founder of an Aboriginal Landcare provider in the Parkes and Forbes area. I have dedicated much of my life to protecting Country, culture, and waterways. In 2018, I kayak paddled down the Lachlan River 900km for 41 days as part of the *Lachlan for Youth* initiative, carrying a cultural message stick to raise awareness for river protection and to inspire young people to reconnect with Country. Guided by a companion from South Australia, this journey honoured the spirit of our waterways and the strength of our youth.

In 2019 I paddled the Murrumbidgee River as part of a project bringing awareness and raising funds for our service men and women by supporting Wounded Heroes Australia. I was in the Defence Force myself for 14 years and came out with PTSD and some mental health issues. I used the river as a pathway for healing, reflection, and cultural connection. Through these journeys and the programs, I lead I work to protect our river systems and teach the next generations the old ways of caring for land, water, and people.

My submission reflects deep concern for the environmental, cultural, health, and social risks of the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility near Parkes and the lack of genuine consultation with Traditional Custodians.

Lack of Consultation and Cultural Exclusion

Consultation should not be a box-ticking exercise. It must follow the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), as recognised by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). FPIC ensures Traditional Custodians have the time, resources, and opportunity to understand, discuss, and influence decisions that directly affect their Country.

True consultation means listening, not informing after decisions have been made.

Key Questions:
• How has the Parkes Waste project met the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)?

• Which Wiradjuri Elders or Traditional Custodians were consulted and when?
• What mechanisms will ensure ongoing community and cultural participation in decision-making?

Risks to Culturally Significant Areas and Wiradjuri Heritage

The proposed site sits on Wiradjuri Country, where the Bogan and Lachlan Rivers connect our communities, families, and stories. These rivers are sacred they are living entities that hold story, law, and life, and connect Wiradjuri people across Peak Hill, Condobolin, Wellington, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Narromine, Forbes, Cowra, Wagga, Nyngan, Brewarrina, and Bourke.

Risks include:
• Damage or disturbance to sacred and cultural sites.
• Pollution of waterways and soils that sustain food, medicine, and ceremony.
• Disruption to the natural balance of Country, which carries deep spiritual meaning.

For Wiradjuri people, Country is not just land it is family. Any harm to Country affects our knowing, being, and doing, and disrupts connections across generations.

Key Questions:
• Has a full cultural heritage assessment been completed, and by whom?
• How will the project ensure protection of waterways and sacred sites connected to the Lachlan system?
• What role will Traditional Custodians play in environmental oversight?

Health, Environmental, and Social Risks

I am deeply concerned about the health and environmental risks of the proposed incinerator, especially for Wiradjuri communities who already face disproportionate health challenges.

Key Risks:
• Air pollution and toxic emissions that exacerbate respiratory diseases like COPD, asthma, and rheumatic heart disease.
• Water contamination impacting catchments, tanks, and local drinking sources.
• Soil degradation and biodiversity loss, threatening totem species, native plants, and food sources.
• Noise, odour, and vermin causing reduced quality of life and mental health strain.
• Emotional stress and community division, particularly for Aboriginal families who have fought long to protect Country.

Key Questions:
• What long-term health monitoring will be conducted for nearby communities?
• How will the project address the elevated health risks already present in Aboriginal populations?
• Will the facility's emissions data be made publicly available and independently verified?

Economic and Equity Concerns

This project places an unfair burden on regional communities like Parkes and Forbes, being asked to take Sydney's waste even though similar facilities are banned in metropolitan areas.

Concerns include:
• Impacts on local farms, soil health, and livestock.
• Decreased property values, reduced tourism, and loss of investor confidence.
• Limited economic return or employment pathways for local Aboriginal communities.

Key Questions:
• Why are regional towns expected to host waste facilities rejected in Sydney?
• What tangible economic or employment benefits will be delivered to Wiradjuri and local Aboriginal communities?
• How will local farmers and landholders be compensated for loss of land value or productivity?

Cultural, Social, and Emotional Impacts

This proposal has already caused distress and uncertainty in the community. Many people feel ignored, unsafe, and disempowered.

For myself, and for the local Wiradjuri people, these impacts are not only physical they are spiritual and emotional. The thought of an incinerator operating on our Country, near our Significant and Sacred Places, brings grief and fear for what it means for the land, our children, and our cultural future.

Key Questions:
• What supports are in place for communities experiencing cultural or emotional distress as a result of this project?
• How will ongoing community dialogue be maintained to rebuild trust and transparency?

Conclusion

Our rivers, our land, and our people are all connected. I take guidance from Forbes Elder Uncle Robert Kleeg, whose wisdom reminds us that Country is life, and life must be respected.

This project passes no tests not environmental, not cultural, not moral. It will not only destroy the town of Parkes and the surrounding communities, it will destroy Country. When that happens, and the land, water, and people suffer the consequences, who will pay for what is lost?

The Parkes Waste proposal raises profound cultural, environmental, and social dangers that cannot be ignored or justified. Decisions made now will echo through generations, and once the damage is done, there will be no fixing it.

I urge all decision-makers to act with respect, responsibility, and true partnership with Wiradjuri people to listen, to protect, and to choose life over destruction.

Proud Wiradjuri Man
Founder,
Forbes, NSW