

Submission  
No 901

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE  
FACILITIES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

## **Waste from Energy submission**

Submission: Inquiry into Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities – Opposition to Parkes Incinerator

To the Honourable Members of the Inquiry into Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities,

This submission strongly opposes the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) incinerator planned for the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP) in NSW. We believe (my wife and I) that this project poses unacceptable risks to human health, the local agricultural economy, and the environment, and undermines state efforts towards a true circular economy.

Moving to Parkes in 2021 has been the best move for us as a family and with work opportunities and we now have settled, met wonderful people and our 5 beautiful boys ranging between the age of 4 to 14 are happy in their schooling, and sporting endeavours. We are extremely disappointed in the local council with the initial lack of communication and transparency of the waste from energy plan and initial proposals and has really caught us off guard this year with things coming to light, in a blind sighting way which has fractured the trust in the local council and associated Waste from Energy company as a whole.

For the sake of 52 full time jobs at the end of construction, it is merely satisfactory to compensate for the risks that potentially loom for our community and others for that matter. Parkes is a wonderful, tidy and well respected town that deserves better than this and serious consideration needs to be placed on 'people' NOT Profit and back pockets.

### **1. Environmental & Health Risks (Toxic Emissions and Ash)**

The proposed EfW incinerator, which will primarily process up to 600,000 tonnes of residual waste per annum, largely transported from Sydney, presents significant and unacceptable risks:

**Toxic Air Emissions:** While proponents cite "state-of-the-art" technology, incineration generates Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), including dioxins, furans, heavy metals (such as mercury and lead), and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). These toxins pose a known risk for respiratory illnesses and are classified as potential carcinogens.

**Toxic Ash Disposal:** Incineration does not eliminate waste; it concentrates it. The facility will produce large volumes of hazardous fly ash and bottom ash, which contain heavy metals and other concentrated pollutants. There is no safe, long-term plan for the disposal of this toxic ash that guarantees it will not contaminate regional soil and water resources.

**Inadequate Monitoring:** Current NSW EPA requirements are considered less stringent than international best practice in terms of continuous monitoring for highly toxic substances (like dioxins and furans) and continuous ambient air quality monitoring. Without robust, continuous biomonitoring, the community has no assurance of long-term safety.

### **2. Risk to Agriculture and Economic Reputation**

Parkes and the surrounding region are highly productive agricultural areas with a valuable reputation as a "clean and green" food bowl. This facility directly threatens that status:

Contamination Risk: The dispersion of toxic emissions and/or accidental release of toxic ash could contaminate local crops, soil, livestock, and water supplies, compromising food safety and quality.

Market Access and Trade: The mere presence of a large-scale incinerator poses a major risk to market access, both domestic and international. The perceived risk of contamination could lead to buyers boycotting regional produce, causing catastrophic, irreversible financial damage to farming families and the regional economy.

Undermining the SAP's Vision: Locating a waste incinerator next to prime agricultural land contradicts the vision of the Parkes SAP as an eco-industrial hub and undermines the value of the surrounding productive land.

### 3. Social Equity and Environmental Injustice

The decision to locate a facility processing Sydney's waste over 500km away in a regional community represents environmental injustice:

Regional Burden: EfW facilities are banned or heavily restricted in Greater Sydney, yet the policy allows them in regional areas like Parkes. This effectively makes a rural community the dumping ground for Sydney's residual waste.

Public Health Proximity: The proposed location is unacceptably close to the Parkes township, including residential areas, schools, and hospitals, exposing vulnerable populations to long-term health risks.

Erosion of Property Values: The presence and stigma of a waste incinerator will inevitably diminish property values for residents and farmers who have invested their lives and savings in the region.

### 4. Conflict with Circular Economy Principles

Incineration is an end-of-pipe solution that sits low on the waste hierarchy, above only landfill. Approving this facility works against the state's goals:

Disincentive for Recycling: A \$1.5 billion facility requiring 600,000 tonnes of waste per year for guaranteed profit creates a long-term financial incentive to maintain high waste levels and undermines investment in the higher-order solutions of waste avoidance, reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Locking in Fossil Fuels: Much of the feedstock for incineration is plastic, which is derived from fossil fuels. Burning this material contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and simply trades landfill methane for stack CO2 emissions.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

We urge the Committee to acknowledge that the potential risks to human health, agriculture, and the environment far outweigh the short-term energy and waste-reduction benefits claimed by the proponents.

We recommend the Inquiry reject the proposal for the Energy from Waste incinerator in Parkes and, instead, advocate for significant state investment in advanced resource recovery, waste separation infrastructure, and mandatory waste reduction targets to achieve a genuinely sustainable circular economy for Parkes and for NSW.

Thank you