

Submission
No 933

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To Whom It May Concern

Parliamentary Inquiry on Proposed Energy-from-Waste Facilities in the Parkes Region

My name is . I am a resident of the town of Parkes and have lived here all my life. I run a small business in town, employ locals, and raise my young family here with my wife. I submit this statement to express my deep concern and opposition to the proposed energy-from-waste “EfW” facility on the outskirts of Parkes. I present this from the perspective of someone born and bred here, with a livelihood tied to the community, land and clean environment in short, I believe this facility will be detrimental to our town and its residents.

Community & Local Economy

Parkes is more than just a regional centre it is a town of farmers, families, local businesses, and an agricultural reputation that extends well beyond our region. Our economy depends on this clean, trusted image. To bring in a large-scale EfW facility will fundamentally alter that identity. For example, recent media coverage has recorded local farmers and residents stating the proposed facility “will destroy the reputation of the agricultural sector in the region.”

As a business owner I am particularly concerned about:

- The potential drop in property values for local homes and commercial property if the facility is perceived as industrial, risky or undesirable.
- The risk of harming the tourism, agriculture and service industries here, by damaging the “clean country” brand of Parkes.
- The burden of increased heavy truck/rail traffic (the proposal notes 60 trainloads of rubbish from Sydney per day) that will impact roads, infrastructure and local amenity.

This is not just a “not-in-my-backyard” reaction: it is a genuine fear that the long-term economic health of our town will be compromised in favour of external waste streams rather than local community interests.

Health, Environment & Precaution

Residents of Parkes are rightly worried about the environment in which our children grow up, the air we breathe, the land we farm, and the water we drink. While proponents claim that modern technology mitigates all risks, I believe the evidence suggests caution is warranted.

Health Risks

- A recent systematic review on waste incineration a closely related technology found that although the evidence is limited, poorly operated facilities or ones burning unsorted waste may emit higher levels of dioxins/furans and heavy metals, which pose human health risks.
- An article covering the proposed Parkes facility cited an expert who noted that “old incinerators ... had raised health outcomes including asthma, some cancers and some congenital abnormalities.”
- A recent review of risk assessments found that about 60 % of environmental assessments on municipal solid waste management flagged human-health risks (including EfW).

Local Environmental Concerns

- We are a productive agricultural region. Any perception of contamination or even increased industrial activity may undermine confidence in our produce and land.
- There is potential for increased air emissions, ash/residue disposal issues, heavy-vehicle impacts, and risk of operational failure or abnormal events which tend to have disproportionate impacts. The legal commentary states: “EfW is an obvious example ... serious concerns ... about the possible health risks of emissions from energy from waste facilities.”

Precautionary Principle

Given that our town is small with population just over 10,000 and our local economy and reputation highly interlinked with environment and agriculture, I believe that the precautionary principle should apply: we should not expose our community to a large-scale facility whose full long-term impacts are uncertain.

While some reviews for example in Europe conclude that well-operated EfW may not give rise to “significant effects on health” under certain conditions, they are careful to emphasise *well-operated* and *properly sorted waste streams*. I do not believe it is prudent to rely on “if everything is perfect” when the worst-case cost to our community could be very high.

Suitability of Parkes as a Location

The site being proposed in the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, about 3 km out of town raises additional concerns:

- Transporting large volumes of waste from Sydney hundreds of kilometres means significant traffic, rail, logistics and distribution impacts. The “waste-import” model may put Parkes in the role of a regional waste dump rather than a community benefit.
- The facility scale 600,000 tonnes of waste per year according to media reporting means this is not a small local facility but a major industrial project that will bring heavy infrastructure, emissions, and risk.
- The argument made by proponents is that because such facilities exist in dense urban areas e.g. Copenhagen, Denmark they must be safe. But those urban facilities still operate under extremely stringent oversight, benefit from massive population and regulatory infrastructure, and are in different contexts. Copying that model into rural NSW without robust local assessment is unwise.

There is precedent in NSW of an EfW facility being refused on the basis of uncertain health or environmental impacts. This suggests our regulatory framework recognises the scale of uncertainty in these projects.

Impact on My Family & Our Future

As someone raising children here, I cannot help but picture what our town might become if a major waste-to-energy plant enters our community. The worries include:

- Our children growing up with a large industrial facility on their horizon, with increased trucking, noise, dust, air-emissions and possibly a changed town feeling.
- My business which relies on a healthy, vibrant town, local families, tourism and agriculture being impacted by these changes customers may choose to live or spend in places unaffected by major industrial waste projects.
- Long-term land value and attractiveness of Parkes as a place to live and raise a family being diminished.
- Losing control of our local destiny: the decision seems oriented towards processing external waste streams rather than strengthening local industries, recycling, waste reduction, and diversified employment.

Conclusion & Recommendation

In conclusion, I respectfully submit that the proposed EfW facility in Parkes poses significant and legitimate risks to our community economic, environmental, social and health. I do not believe these risks have been fully addressed or satisfactorily mitigated, especially given our region's dependence on agriculture, reputation for clean-living, and small community scale.

Therefore, I urge this Inquiry to recommend that the project not proceed in its current form. Instead, I propose that alternatives be explored:

- A stronger focus on waste reduction, reuse and recycling within the region rather than import and burning.
- Smaller scale local waste-processing solutions that align with regional industries and do not impose large industrial burdens on our community.
- A full, independent health impact assessment (HIA) and cumulative risk assessment specific to our region, with full community consultation before any decision is made.
- That any future proposal must clearly demonstrate that all materials to be processed are strictly controlled, emission standards guaranteed, full monitoring data transparent and community protections enforced.

As a lifelong resident of Parkes, running a business and raising a family here, I believe we must protect the community we know and love. We must not allow our town to become the regional sacrifice zone for interstate waste or adopt a major industrial facility whose risks may overshadow the benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Parkes, NSW

29/10/2025