

**Submission
No 962**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES

Name: Mrs Jacinda Acheson

Date Received: 31 October 2025

Submission Objecting to the Proposed Parkes Waste-to-Energy (WtE) Incinerator

To: NSW Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure / Parkes Shire Council

From: Jacinda Acheson, Forbes NSW

Re: Objection to the Parkes Energy Recovery (WtE) Incinerator and its Impacts on Forbes and the Lachlan Catchment

1) Summary

I oppose the Parkes Waste-to-Energy (WtE) incinerator because it threatens the health of Forbes residents, our agricultural economy, and regional air quality. The facility would emit known and suspected carcinogens—including dioxins/furans and fine particulate matter (PM2.5)—as well as acid gases and heavy metals. These pollutants can travel well beyond Parkes to Forbes (about 33 km down the Newell Highway), depending on seasonal winds.

2) Distance, Wind and Exposure Pathway to Forbes

Forbes is approximately 33 km from Parkes, a daily commute for many residents. Seasonal wind patterns for Parkes are often westerly in winter and southerly/easterly at other times, meaning Forbes can be downwind of Parkes for substantial parts of the year. Fine particles (PM2.5) and combustion by-products can travel hundreds to thousands of kilometres, so a 33 km separation offers no protective buffer.

3) Cancer-Causing Emissions and Hazardous Pollutants

Even modern WtE plants emit toxic pollutants:

- Dioxins/furans (PCDD/Fs): Classified by the WHO as known human carcinogens (Group 1). Dioxins persist and bioaccumulate in the food chain.
- PM2.5: Fine particles cause and aggravate cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular disease.
- Heavy metals and acid gases: Mercury, cadmium, lead, arsenic, HCl, HF, NOx, and SO2—all pose significant health and environmental risks.

4) How Far Will Emissions Travel?

Regulatory dispersion models show plumes can extend many kilometres. Studies confirm dioxin dispersion and deposition downwind of municipal incinerators. Dioxins are persistent, and exposure occurs via contaminated soil, crops, meat, and dairy products—directly affecting Forbes' agricultural base.

5) Agriculture, Water, and Regional Economy Risks

The proposed plant could process up to 600,000 tonnes per year, generating toxic ash requiring secure disposal. That introduces long-term transport and contamination risks within the region. Limited long-term studies exist, and rural communities like Forbes would bear the exposure risk with no proven benefit.

6) Monitoring Gaps and Community Confidence

NSW policy does not require continuous monitoring for metals or dioxins/furans—only periodic testing. This allows undetected emission spikes. No filtration system is perfect; efficiency varies with temperature, waste type, and maintenance. Periodic testing cannot prove real-time safety for Forbes residents.

7) Safer, Higher-Value Alternatives

The National Waste Policy Action Plan (2024) prioritises waste avoidance, reuse, and recycling. Building a 30–40-year incinerator locks in waste supply, undermines recycling investment, and contradicts Australia's circular economy goals.

8) Requests

1. Reject the Parkes WtE incinerator on health, agricultural, and regional equity grounds.
2. If not rejected, require:
 - Real-time public stack data;
 - Continuous monitoring for metals and dioxins/furans;
 - Independent air, soil, and food-chain monitoring for Forbes;
 - A binding waste-hierarchy plan proving all recovery options are exhausted before combustion.

References (Summary)

- WHO/IARC: Dioxins and PM2.5 classified as Group 1 carcinogens.
- ABC News (2025): Parkes Energy Recovery proposal (~600,000 tonnes/year).
- NSW EPA: Energy from Waste monitoring guidelines.
- Australian State of the Environment: PM2.5 can travel hundreds to thousands of kilometres.
- Weatherspark: Parkes wind direction data.