

Submission
No 1023

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ENERGY FROM WASTE
FACILITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 31 October 2025

Partially
Confidential

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Energy from Waste

From:

Date: 31st October 2025

Introduction

Formal Objection to the Proposed Energy-from-Waste Incinerator at Parkes.

We thank you for the opportunity to openly express our deepest concerns of the matter at hand. We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility in Parkes, on behalf of ourselves and our 3 young children. We are fourth generation farmers who have lived and worked in the Parkes Shire our entire life. As farmers our whole existence and livelihood is dependant entirely upon the health of our land, air and water. As concerned farmers, we are deeply worried about the significant risks this project poses to the health, environment, and economy of our community. The proximity to farmland and schools makes this proposal unacceptable.

Key grounds for objection

Unacceptable health risks from emissions

All the current research indicates that modern incinerators are not risk-free. They are factually known to produce Persistent organic Pollutants (POPS) which persist in the environment and accumulate in the air, soil, water and food chain. Additionally, the continuous burning of waste produces Particulate Matter (PM2.5 and PM10) which fills the air and enters the human body through inhalation and or enters the bloodstream causing both immediate and long-term health effects. The health impacts from these EfW facilities include but are not limited to respiratory problems, cardiovascular issues, long-term diseases such as cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), reproductive issues, immune system damage, hormone disruption and premature births or infant deaths. Even the most 'advanced' incinerators release thousands of pollutants that contaminate our land, air and water. There is no "safe" level of exposure to these forever chemicals. The NSW (EPA) are carelessly making rules and regulations that are not equitable. The EPA keeps adjusting its criteria for the use of EfW facilities without adequate consideration for the rights of all human beings. The risk thresholds are being selectively applied based on geography rather than objective health criteria. Sydney

was allowed to reject this EfW facility on the grounds of health and environmental risks, yet we the people of Parkes are now being asked to carry their waste and simply must accept the same health and environmental risks that they were allowed to deny!

'Placing such a project in Regional NSW, does not eliminate the risk, it just redirects the risk to a population perceived to be of lesser value, visibility and political power'. The policies currently being created around the use of EfW facilities in Australia showcase urban narcissism at its finest.

Agricultural and food safety risks

Our farming business is solely dependant upon the land. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we maintain the highest standards of food health and safety. This project undoubtedly threatens the foundations upon which healthy and sustainable farming is built upon. The toxins from the incinerator eventually settles onto farmland contaminating soil, pastures, livestock, crop and waterways, which is a direct threat to food safety and market access. In the last decade scientific research has proven that even low levels of dioxins have been found to contaminate food. Contamination of soil, air or water from these heavy metals, dioxins or other persistent pollutants poses a serious risk to biosecurity and export integrity. The studies have shown that food is an exposure pathway for these pollutants. Therefore, bold approaches much be adopted to protect the soil, water and air from further pollution and degradation. The risk of even minor contamination from the EfW facility could permanently jeopardise and harm Parkes' agricultural credibility and reputation. Should this proposal be successful all aspects of our farming business will be severely affected in the long term. It will result in a significant decline in productivity, revenue, land value, the ability to source and retain staff as well as the ability for our future generations to learn and keep alive the important skills associated with agriculture. Parkes is a key food producing region in NSW. Therefore, it is unreasonable and irresponsible to place these health and environmental risks onto a food producing community that relevant authorities have acknowledged are deemed unsafe for most of NSW. Treating regional communities who work tirelessly to provide essential goods to our nation and beyond with such disregard is both unfair and unjust.

Proximity to school

Can you imagine the outcry and outrage of parents if this EfW facility was to be placed within 5kms from the schools in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne or Brisbane? I think its

fair to say we all know the answer to this. So, my question to you is why it ok near our schools? Why are the children of the Parkes Shire of any less value? Children are some of society's most innocent and vulnerable individuals, therefore it is crucial that we protect their health and safety, despite the cost. The foundations built in childhood have a lasting impact. If this facility were to go ahead you would be placing these innocent children directly under the emissions from the incinerator, including dioxins, furans, ultrafine particles and other toxic pollutants in excess of 30 hours per week. No parent would willingly expose their children to these hazardous airborne toxins. The right to clean air is a fundamental human right and has been recognized as part of the broader universal human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2022. Various studies have confirmed that there is no 'safe level' of airborne pollutants from these waste incinerators so pollutants continue to seep into our communities making us void of our right to clean air. This EfW facility is knowingly and willingly exploiting the health of our future generations for the sake of convenience, which is simply unacceptable. The proximity of this EfW from our schools is not just irresponsible it is unjust and directly threatening the wellbeing of our children and our community.

Lack of Consultation

It is deeply concerning that Sydney's waste problem is being exposed on vulnerable regional communities such as Parkes, Goulburn, Lithgow, and the Richmond Valley. These communities are already faced with a multitude of challenges due to their location and lack of access to larger resources for various goods and services. Now they are being asked to bear the environmental, health and economic risks of a problem that originates far from their homes. The consultation process to date has been largely secretive, inadequate, fragmented and non-transparent, leaving residents with little opportunity to study the information of the project at hand and make informed decisions accordingly. The lack of community engagement and transparency may suggest that critical information is being withheld and raises serious questions about the fairness and integrity of the planning process. Additionally, to date there has been little information presented on how the EfW facility has consulted and plan on considering the cultural and historical needs of our local custodians of the land - the Wiradjuri people who have been here for over 40,000 years. Their culture remains a strong and visible part of the community, and it is concerning to think that the Wiradjuri people have not been adequately consulted during the planning process. We

understand the importance that the Wiradjuri people have in preserving and protecting the air, soil and land as it holds cultural significance and history that if tainted will have detrimental and irreversible effects on their heritage. Our regional communities are being preyed upon simply because we are outside metropolitan areas, yet our rights deserve equal consideration.

Factual Objectives directly quoted from GAIA's – Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives report

FACT 1: Waste is not and should not be fuel. Incinerators waste resources and undermine recycling and reduction efforts.

- Approximately 90% of materials currently disposed of in incinerators and landfills can be reused, recycled and composted.

FACT 2: "Waste-to-energy" incinerators consume more energy than they produce.

- All incinerators are a massive waste of energy. Due to the low calorific value of waste, incinerators are only able to generate small amounts of energy while destroying large amounts of reusable materials.
- A UK led study found that conversion efficiencies of new incineration technologies are even lower than that of older ones.

FACT 3: Waste incineration is not renewable energy—and it takes investments away from real renewable energy solutions.

- Municipal waste is non-renewable
- Burning these materials to generate electricity creates a demand for things to burn, and discourages much needed efforts to conserve resources

FACT 4: "Waste-to-energy" incinerators produce the same toxic emissions as ordinary incinerators.

- Even the most "advanced" incinerators release thousands of pollutants daily
- Incinerator pollution control devices are not fool-proof and there are many examples of failures of facilities even with "state-of-the-art" pollution control devices.
- Aside from toxic air emissions, incineration technologies produce highly toxic by-products.
- US regulatory agencies have found that incinerators are prone to various types of malfunctions, system failures and breakdowns, which routinely lead to serious

air pollution control problems and increased emissions that are dangerous to public health

FACT 5: “Waste-to-energy” incinerators contribute to climate change.

- Incinerators emit more CO₂ per megawatt-hour than coal-fired, natural-gas-fired, or oil-fired power plants.

FACT 6: WTE incinerators are prohibitively expensive

- Incinerators are the most expensive method to generate energy and to handle waste, while also creating a significant economic burden for host cities
- The use of diesel freight trains to transport hundreds of thousands of tonnes of Sydney’s waste over 500km’s to Parkes is incredibly contradictory to much of the governments own climate policies and emissions reducing schemes

FACT 7: WTE incinerators take away jobs

- Incinerators require huge capital investments, but they offer relatively few jobs when compared to recycling.
- Recycling in comparison typically creates 10-20 times more jobs than incinerators
- The proposal of a EfW facility in Parkes has already caused angst amongst individuals in the region. A local survey by Parkes Clean Future Alliance confirmed that the environmental and health risks associated with incinerators will see hundreds of individuals across multiple professions leave the shire.

FACT 8: WTE incineration is not compatible with a sustainable circular economy

- incinerators fundamentally incompatible with a closed-loop and circular economy.
- They are essentially destroyers of discarded materials, and concentrators of toxicity. They exacerbate waste disposal problems, they do not eliminate waste, instead they produce large quantities of hazardous ash

FACT 9: The world is shifting away from incineration and embracing Zero Waste

- Many developments today reveal that the world is waking up and realizing the failures of incineration.
- Europe is home to some of the most advanced waste burning facilities in the world, and they have taken their first steps to phase out incinerators. Instead

they aim to adopt a plan for a circular economy ‘one in which the value of products, materials and resources is maintained for as long as possible, minimizing waste and resources.’

Above facts have been directly quoted from the following source - Facts about “waste-to-energy” incinerators. (n.d.). <https://www.no-burn.org/wp-content/uploads/GAIA-Facts-about-WTE-incinerators-Jan2018-1.pdf>

(This paper has extensive scientific research and data backing its claims)

Concluding remarks

Let’s not be on the wrong side of history. Let’s learn from the costly mistakes of other countries who also at one point in time thought EfW incinerators was “green, safe and effective”. Every year all around the globe these incinerators are being decommissioned because countries are recognising the poor conditions surrounding the incineration industry and the negative long-term effects on our health and the environment. Placing Sydney’s waste problem onto our rural community is a form of environmental injustice. We are forced to accept all risks attached to this project at the benefit of others, all whilst damaging the character and quality of life in our region in the process. These pollutants are persistent in the environment, transboundary and bio-accumulative, posing a global environmental pollution threat. POPS and fine particulate matter are forever chemicals, and they are exactly that forever. So, whilst the more ‘favourable’ populations in Australia have been allowed to ban and legislate against the use of EfW incinerators, overtime as these pollutants continue to seep into the air, water, soil and food it will indefinitely impact you too.

Request

For the reasons outlined above, we respectfully urge you to reject the proposal for the energy-from-waste incinerator at Parkes. Instead, we call for investments in proven, safe, and sustainable waste management strategies that prioritize community health and environmental protection.

Thank you for your time and for considering our concerns regarding this critical matter. We look forward to receiving a fair and just response by addressing these objections.

Yours sincerely,

Research

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Jane Bremmer, Chair of TFA and coordinator of the Zero Waste Australia campaign.

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