

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED
ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITIES**

PUBLIC FORUM

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**At the Robert Wilson Auditorium, Parkes Leagues Club, Parkes,
on Tuesday 14 April 2026**

The Committee met at 14:15.

PRESENT

The Hon. Nichole Overall (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Banasiak

The Hon. Peter Primrose

The Hon. Rod Roberts

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The CHAIR: Welcome to the first public forum of the Committee's inquiry into proposed energy-from-waste facilities here in Parkes. I acknowledge the Wiradjuri people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Nichole Overall, and I am the Chair of the Committee.

Welcome to you all, and thank you for making the time to speak to the Committee today. This forum is an opportunity for members of the Parkes community to share your thoughts on proposals to build energy-from-waste facilities in New South Wales. I will now give you a very brief rundown on how this forum will run. Firstly, I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. This is a parliamentary proceeding and standards of respectful conduct apply at all times. Disruptive behaviour, interruptions, applause or demonstrations are not permitted. The speaking list has been posted on the door of the room, and we ask that speakers come to the microphone in the order listed. To allow things to move quickly, I ask that if you are speaking next—and I will give a speaker's name and then the person who is following as well—please come up and sit near the microphone. I will call your name when it's your turn to speak.

To ensure that the Committee hears from as many of you as possible, speaking time is limited to two minutes. Being mindful of the fact that we do have a number of people, obviously, on the list, we don't want to be eating into the time of other members of the community who also wish to contribute. The Committee is on a time frame with this as well. We will ring the bell at the two-minute mark to signal the end of speaking time. Please state your full name before speaking and if you're appearing on behalf of an organisation. Please note that each person will be permitted to speak once only. A reminder that the Committee will not be answering questions today, as the purpose of this forum is to hear from the community about your views on the proposed energy-from-waste facility.

Parliamentary privilege applies to the evidence that you give today. However, I still urge you to be very respectful in any comments that you make and refrain from making any adverse mentions. If you prefer not to speak today or if you didn't get the chance to register to be on our list, please be advised that there is a suggestion box available for you to submit your views. There are pens and paper available for you to write with. These suggestions will be formally accepted for the Committee's information only, and they will be kept confidential. On behalf of the Committee, I will quickly introduce my fellow members: the Hon. Mark Banasiak, the Hon. Rod Roberts and the Hon. Peter Primrose. Our secretariat, staff and members of Hansard are here as well. With that in mind, I call the first speaker.

CHRISTINE TEN CATE, before the Committee: My name is Christine Ten Cate. I am here today to speak for myself. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion on the waste-to-energy project for Parkes. I am in favour of this, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who wants to see this go ahead. So many yellow protest signs located all around the town can seem quite intimidating. Is it convincing some that it must be bad? Are those who support this facility unwilling to voice their opinion for fear of being cut down, crucified? I believe this facility will be a huge benefit to our town and shire. Parkes has been a stand-out, model country town for its vision in building energy-saving and environmentally friendly projects such as the sewage treatment works, water treatment, stormwater recycling—all environmentally friendly projects. This waste facility can add to all that. We need to be building on what our past and present leaders have achieved.

Apart from those projects that I've just mentioned, think Northparkes Mines and our administration and library centre. Remember, a lot of the community were against them. Imagine what Parkes would be like if the community had won those battles. The cash injection from Northparkes Mines has been a huge contribution to so much we have now. This waste facility promises to add to that contribution. We all need to address the growing landfill issue. Sydney is almost at capacity; it has to go somewhere else. "Well, not here," I hear you say. I understand there is still much to be researched and proven either way, so let's not make assumptions that the facility will be a threat to our health and livelihood until proven. Let the proponents complete their extensive due diligence. I believe there are many benefits to be gained from this. Those who are against it seem willing to forgo all that for what they think just might be a problem. Waste to energy is the future. Let's make Parkes the vanguard for this technology in our country. Let's see Parkes survive and thrive.

JOHN KENNEDY, before the Committee: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Francis John Kennedy. I'm a long-time resident of Parkes. I've lived here all my life, both with business and family. I draw your attention to the fact that Parkes shire has a population, from the 2021 census, of 16,500 people. Parkes has a population of 13,331, as per the census. My main concern here is the misrepresentation that has been put forward by the alliance and a lot of the advertising that has been put out there. We had a meeting here at this facility which 600 people attended, and 95 per cent of those people were already

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against it. We sat there and watched videos of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War being presented as what will happen here today if a facility is built. That scaremongering has caused a lot of damage to the community and Parkes as a whole.

We've had protest marches. My interest is why we do not have a protest march for the members and residents of Parkes shire. We had protest marches in support of the farmers and we had a protest march in support of Indigenous people. Let's look at reality. If anyone is going to be affected initially with what is going to happen, it is the residents of this community here and the associated villages, and also Forbes. We are supposed to have a fallout area of 100 kilometres to 150 kilometres. Therefore, we are looking at Orange, Forbes, Cowra, Condobolin and all the little villages in between. I draw your attention to the fact that we had a petition with some 6,500 signatures on it. Have those signatures been verified and are they residents of Parkes shire and the Parkes community? It would be interesting to find out. The amount of submissions that were put forward—

The CHAIR: Mr Kennedy, I'm sorry but your time has concluded. Thank you for your contribution.

PAMELA NANKIVELL, before the Committee: My name is Pam Nankivell. I'm a citizen of Parkes and I just love this town. I've worked to make it a successful and happy place, and I've contributed as much as I can for about 70 years. Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas, responsible for roughly 30 per cent of global warming since pre-industrial times. Landfills emit methane. Landfills are responsible for the release of toxins and harmful substances into the atmosphere—in particular, methane, which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide and is associated with air and water pollution as well as biodiversity loss and land degradation. As global warming speeds up, to have a liveable future for humankind, we must do everything to slow it down.

The proposed Parkes facility will divert 600,000 tonnes of residual waste every year from landfill, not only helping to solve Sydney's problem but also, with the demand for electricity increasing exponentially, it would be of great value to the whole region—for instance, more good work opportunities for some of our more talented children, who won't have to leave home if they wish to stay in the country. More people means more profits for our local businesses. Also, unlike many of the smaller towns, we are unlikely to lose any of our services but will probably attract new ones. In addition, the facility owners will pay our council an extremely large amount yearly, and there will be many good new industries opening up in the precinct due to the reliable cheaper power and our strategic location, which means that goods can be easily dispatched all over Australia. How lucky we are! And with a special activation precinct being located a few kilometres to the west of the town and on the other side of the now-moved Newell Highway, we can expect our town to remain the quiet, lovely place to live in that it is today.

KEITH WOODLANDS, before the Committee: My name is Keith Woodlands. I have lived in Parkes for 37 years. I have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren living in the Parkes-Forbes district. I grew up on a dairy farm on the North Coast, about 20 kilometres from Wauchope. Our family had owned the property for over five generations. Wauchope was known as the "timber town" because it had 12 sawmills and two plywood mills adjacent to the town. Each mill had two fire pits which burnt day and night, 24/7. One was a smouldering sawdust pit and the other was a less-smoky pit burning all the offcuts.

For those who took the time to go to the information day on the incinerator in the pavilion just over 12 months ago, they listed some of the sources of dioxins. One prominent source was smoking wood heaters. They also showed that reducing their dioxin level could be done by increasing the temperature and reducing the smoke. The green sawdust constantly smouldering in the pits would have been a constant source of dioxins. I have arrived in Wauchope from university on the North Coast mail train at five o'clock in the morning to see the whole town blanketed in sawdust smoke from the 12 sawmills. There have never been any reports of birth defects or contamination of land. They have built houses on most of the old sawmill sites. I grew up on a dairy farm about 20 kilometres from town and we had a sawmill 800 metres from where we lived. The primary school which I went to was 100 metres from the fire pit—

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Woodlands. Your time is up. We appreciate your contribution.

SHARON WOODS, before the Committee: Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sharon Woods. My husband and I are fifth-generation farmers and our children hope to continue the legacy as sixth generation. Everything we do depends on clean soil, clean water and a safe environment. We rely solely on rainwater for our drinking—we don't have the luxury of town water—so when we talk about emissions from an energy-from-waste incinerator, this is not theoretical for us. What falls from the sky lands directly in our water tanks, on our crops and in our pastures. The proposed facility would burn unsorted red-bin commercial and industrial waste—a mix that can include batteries, plastics and chemicals. Even with modern filters, the smallest and most dangerous particles cannot be captured. These toxins don't just disappear; they settle in our soil, our water and, ultimately, our food chain. That means the risk doesn't stop at our farm gate. That means families across Australia could unknowingly be consuming contaminated grain and meat.

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Beyond the health risk, there is also the issue of market confidence. In July last year, our family achieved the national merino lamb record at Forbes saleyards. That result reflects trust—trust in our safety and integrity in what we produce. In agriculture, perception matters. Even the perception of contamination can destroy market access overnight. Buyers will not take the risk. We are already facing increasing traceability requirements. Introducing an incinerator into the heart of a prime agricultural region places an unacceptable burden on farmers who are doing the right thing. The burdens of Sydney's waste problems should not be placed in regional communities like ours. Parkes sits in the heart of one of the most productive food and fibre regions in New South Wales, and agriculture here sustains families, businesses and export markets. We cannot risk compromising these foundations for short-term industrial experiments that put our region's farming families' long-term future at stake. I respectfully ask that you consider the long-term consequences not just for the farmers but for food production, public health and the future of regional Australia.

ERIK LENSSON, before the Committee: My name is Erik Lensson. I'm a retired professional engineer and hobby farmer, if you like, and still do some part-time contract work for this and that. What I'm going to talk about is social licence. This project has no social licence. I know that people have said this already, but I'm giving you a quick synopsis of some written evidence to back that up, at least of my experience with this project. When I first heard about this project, I attended a meeting hosted by Parkes Shire Council. I was given the draft master plans dated September 2019, and this is the biggest piece of greenwashing that you will ever see in Parkes.

I haven't got time to go through it, but I am going to present it to you and your group to have a look because you'll realise that this document virtually states that this was a totally green project with no incinerators and only reference to hydrogen gas and methane and agricultural activities to be provided onsite. I commend that to you as exhibit A. That was 2019. Moving forward to 1 October 2021, this is the *Parkes Phoenix* local paper. There is an announcement here about the Parkes Special Activation Precinct starting to take shape: "The precinct will focus on sustainability and aims to become Australia's first United Nations eco-industrial park where businesses will work together to create a true circular economy, where one corporation's waste becomes another's material for production."

The CHAIR: Mr Lensson, I'm sorry, your time is up, but you can certainly have that provided for the Committee to look at.

ERIK LENSSON: Here's the next one on 27 April. I'll leave that with you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Lensson. You can put that forward.

RACHELLE TRUDGETT, before the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rachelle Trudgett. I am a concerned individual with a concerned family. We own primary production land and commercial property. For many years now, we have put everything into building a life and investing our heart and money into this area. I can't believe it's all being undermined by a fundamentally flawed proposal. It is unacceptable to lock us into a waste system that limits better, more economical and cleaner alternatives. It will create a closed, cost-driven system that concentrates control, reduces competition, drives cost up over time and limits flexibility to adapt as better solutions emerge. There is significant long-term revenue tied to waste streams. Revenue from waste should remain in Australia. The public will pay more than they do now, and multiple times across the system.

Long-term contracts lock us into one model, with limited flexibility to adapt as better systems emerge. It separates waste from where it is generated, reducing accountability and incentive to reduce it at the source. It requires constant waste supply. It doesn't align with waste reduction or material recovery, and replaces one disposal challenge with a very intensive system of handling transport and containment for both the waste and residual ash, increasing complexity and risk. It is unacceptable when decisions are presented in a way that is not transparent and downplays the environmental and economic consequences. You do not have a lack of solutions. There has been a failure to apply them properly. Incineration is not a positive solution; it is a shortcut. It is a clear case of city convenience at the cost of country communities. I will not be forced to sacrifice everything so others don't have to change anything. Thank you for your time.

ISABEL GOOLAGONG, before the Committee: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Isabel Goolagong, chairperson of the Lachlan Kalari Bila Aboriginal Water Committee. For the Flow-MER program, I'm also a cultural adviser, and the MDBA and MLDRIN. I'm the previous chair of AWEP, which is the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program. I had all this here ready to go as an Aboriginal perspective, but listening to the people of the community, I can't understand why you would put an incinerator with a 150-kilometre radius of emissions and fallout in a prime food bowl. I support the farmers. My father would have been supporting the farmers if he was still here today. He was the best tractor driver in the world and was very in demand within this community.

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If you want to think about bringing all the waste from Sydney and probably down from Queensland and wider communities, take it further out, please. Do not put it anywhere near our water. "Galari" means sweet water. I wouldn't go and drink it today. Would you? After that incinerator poisons our water, kills our fish and poisons our grains—because today I have to eat what you guys grow. I have to eat your bread and your cakes, and I've got diabetes. The impacts of that incinerator—if you look at Tarago, they're already calling for an inquiry into the health impacts on the wider community. High blood pressure—we already have diabetes and heart problems. You have a very aged community here who can't breathe anyway, so the emissions are going to cause asthma and a lot of problems for health in this community. The property value is going to drop, if you want to talk about money.

MAX SWIFT, before the Committee: I am dead against this incinerator primarily because we have a clean, green image in this area of agriculture. Why put it in an agricultural area? It will decimate us. If it's so damn safe, why don't they put it on the other side of the great divide—which is well named. "It should be right. You've got the train." Thousands of litres of fuel to bring it up and it goes back empty—that's not very logical. We transport a miserable bit of electricity, backed by powerlines which will destroy another heap of land. To me, we need to get our head out of the sand. To me, this is totally illogical. Is the Government going to elect to follow the rail line? No, they're not going to do that—more diesel.

To me, keep our clean, green image and look after our communities. I'm not against development; I'm all for development, actually. I was a shire councillor once and I was accused of being too pro-development. To me, you've just got to look. It was just touched on by a previous speaker about land values and property values. I'd like the Committee to just think for a little while: Would you like to buy a house within a few kays of one of these establishments? This establishment would be a lot better run in Sydney, because they would look after it a lot better and it wouldn't contaminate—

The CHAIR: Mr Swift, you were relatively swift.

BEVERLEY RACHEL ROWE, before the Committee: Good afternoon. I wish to thank the Committee for your attendance today. I know you have an onerous job. As stated in my submission, No. 868, I wish to emphasise the importance of the operating temperature of the incinerator. It must be at least 1,900 degrees Celsius, not 850 degrees Celsius to 1,000 degrees Celsius as promoted by the Parkes energy group. Today I wish to bring to your attention another concern with the incinerator—arsenic. What is it used for? Arsenic is a naturally occurring metalloid widely known for its high toxicity, yet it has significant industrial, agricultural and medical applications. Historically, it is known as the king of poisons. Today its primary use is in the making of alloys, making the hardness for lead and copper, electronics, solar panels, light-emitting diodes, glassmaking, wood preservatives, pesticides and herbicides and cancer treatment.

Arsenic cannot be destroyed in incineration. Instead, it changes form and redistributes itself into the air and solid residues. During the incineration process, most arsenic turns directly from solid to gas—into the flue gas as arsenic trioxide vapour. Fly ash—arsenic tends to concentrate as fly ash and 10 per cent to 40 per cent remains as fine particles. Bottom ash—a significant portion, 60 to 85 per cent, settles in the bottom of the incinerator. Flue gas—any arsenic not captured will emit as toxic vapour. Toxicity—incineration transforms arsenic into the most toxic inorganic form, arsenite, disposed of because it is a hazardous heavy metal. All contaminant materials from the incinerator process must be treated as hazardous waste.

IAN LEONARD ROWE: My concerns are the cost—the \$1.5 billion—to build. In these current times, a project must provide a positive return on investment. How is this project going to return this positive return? Who is going to pay for all these fees? The ratepayers? The taxpayers? What's the cost of running the multiple trains from Sydney each week? Who's paying for that, for the penalties that are written into the contract with the operator? The planners report use 600,000 tonnes of water. What penalties is the Parkes council and the ratepayer liable for in a drought or a failure event, which will impact supply of this necessary amount of water? What other penalties is the Parkes council or New South Wales Government possibly liable for? The contract should be an open document available to all of us, as it affects everyone.

The water onsite—how is it going to be treated after passing through the plant? Will it be stored onsite or released into local waterways? Waste—the energy recovery unit says it will be used for construction-recycled material, but who will use it? Has anyone been contracted to take it? The lower, heavily contaminated stuff, they say will be safely disposed of at a licensed facility? Who and where is this licensed facility and how will it be transported? Rubbish supply and storage use—if there's a major breakdown with the furnace and the rubbish cannot be burned for a period of time, where is the 700,000 tonnes of rubbish from Sydney going to be stored? I have a simple solution: Ban plastics and go back to paper.

GRAEME SOMERS: I'm a local farmer—third-generation farmer here. Our farm's situated in close proximity to where the incinerator's going to go. It has been a privilege of mine to be able to produce food and feed our fellow Australians and other people around the world, where some of our produce goes. But, with the

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stuff we produce, we have very stringent declarations that we have to sign before we can sell our produce. That'll only get worse, as there will be more stuff to go wrong from the incinerator. We have a massive food bowl in 150 kilometres of air, and a river system that includes the Bogan River, the Belubula River, the Macquarie River, the Lachlan River and the local billabong creek.

The water table that a lot of people use for underground water in Parkes is exposed at Westlime, which is about three kilometres from where the incinerator is to be put. Also, the brick pit in town—the water is exposed there. As far as the rail network goes, they say they're going to bring it all from Sydney. The way the rail network is, I reckon it won't be long before it will be coming from Brisbane and Melbourne, and there will be trucks carting the rubbish here too. All the fuel for the trains is delivered by road; it's not delivered by rail. So that's another thing on our transport system: They're going have to bring the fuel here to get those trains going. I have concern about the facility and how they are going to bund it if we have a rain event, which I've seen go down that Brolgan Road fairly deep either side. There's no knowing what's going to happen since they've raised the Brolgan Road.

EDGAR ORR, before the Committee: Thank you for this opportunity to be able to speak. My name is Edgar Orr. I am a farmer, and my family has been in the Parkes shire and farming for over 105 years. My big concern is the contamination of crops, livestock and, of course, wool and our great asset—our land and our water. My fear is that when buyers know that the product comes from Parkes, they won't want to buy it because it will be around the incinerator, which concerns me greatly. Another issue I have is I can't believe the economics of carting the waste product from Sydney down the southern line and back up from Cootamundra. It doesn't make a viable sense, in my opinion. The last thing I'll say, basically, is that if it's not good enough for Sydney and their environment, it's not good enough for our environment either.

BARBARA ORR, before the Committee: We have farmed in the Parkes district for over 105 years. My greatest fear is for the health and wellbeing of my family, grandchildren and the wider Parkes community about this proposal to go ahead. Our region already faces a severe shortage of doctors, nurses and psychologists, leaving us ill-equipped to manage any additional health impact that could arise from a facility of this nature. Beyond the immediate health risks, there is the very real threat of contamination or even the perception of it, which would be devastating for our agricultural industry. Once the integrity of our produce and the reputation of our farming region are damaged, they cannot be recovered. The mental health toll from that alone on farmers would be immense.

I acknowledge that Sydney has a waste problem. That problem should be managed at the source, not exported to regional communities like Parkes. If this technology was deemed unsafe for Sydney, then it is unsafe anywhere and certainly not appropriate in an agricultural region that feeds the State, nation and the world. Chris Bowen, MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, on "Stop the Western Sydney incinerator... again!" states, "No amount of spin about 'clean energy' changes the fact that this massive incinerator will emit fumes right across Western Sydney ... Western Sydney is not a dumping ground and we will not be treated like second-class citizens." Parkes is not a dumping ground and we will not be treated like second-class citizens.

ELIZABETH TANSWELL, before the Committee: Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Tanswell. My husband, Craig, and I are farmer-graziers for Milpose Pastoral Co. We are against the proposed incinerator for Parkes or any other locality in New South Wales. Our farm is 15 kilometres north of the proposed incinerator. Our children are the sixth generation of our family raised on our property. We are immensely proud of our work and our stewardship of our land. We produce wheat, barley, canola and sheep for wool and meat for local and international markets. What we produce is clean, high quality and very traceable. Any doubt cast over the integrity of our produce will collapse consumer confidence and destroy market access, locally and internationally. This proposed incinerator is a clear violation of the precautionary and proximity principles. There is too much unknown, and there is too much at stake.

Our property lies within the Murray-Darling Basin. The Bogan River begins as run-off from our back paddock and flows over 600 kilometres, connecting with the Barwon River. Within the expected contamination zone also lie the Lachlan and Macquarie rivers—lifelines for thousands of people, farms and communities. Regional New South Wales should not be treated as a dumping ground for metropolitan waste simply because our population is smaller and our political voice deemed less. The disproportionate burden being placed on rural communities is unacceptable. The proposed incinerator is the new to last resort of the waste hierarchy. When not all Sydney councils have a FOGO system, why are they foisting the new to last resort on us?

To finish, I find it ironic in the extreme that we are here today in the Robert Wilson Auditorium—Robert, a former mayor who united the Parkes shire and many surrounding shires to fight against the proposed incinerator for Bogan Gate in the early 1990s. To quote Robert from *The Champion-Post* on 5 December 1990, "The future of Bogan Gate and Parkes areas will not be endangered by an item so despised or feared as this incinerator." I ask all of you here today: Where will your food come from in 30 years?

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KRISTEN NEEMS, before the Committee: Good afternoon. My name is Kristen Neems. I'm a Parkes resident. I am against energy-from-waste facilities in New South Wales for many reasons, including the risks to human health through toxic emissions negatively affecting air and water quality, and the safety of our food chain. Bioaccumulative contamination of agricultural land jeopardises our supply of safe food. This in turn decimates primary producers' livelihoods as export markets lose confidence in affected produce. This reduces our safe food supply, driving up supermarket prices. Economies at local, State and Federal levels are impacted, considering over 70 per cent of agricultural produce is exported—and all of this for a facility with a limited life span and therefore not a permanent solution. As mentioned previously, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen states on his website:

No amount of spin about 'clean energy' changes the fact that this massive incinerator will emit fumes right across Western Sydney.

...

Western Sydney is not a dumping ground and we will not be treated like second class citizens.

Why is it okay to try and do the same to regional or any other areas? On a more personal level, the prospect of this kind of facility is extremely worrying. My husband has received a cancer diagnosis, and these stressors are detrimental to his condition. If this proposed facility were to go ahead, we would seriously have to consider leaving Parkes. However, relocating could prove difficult due to the potential decline in property values that this kind of facility could bring—yet another stressor.

Prevention of waste is better than cure. There are prevention opportunities being missed—for example, there are council areas in Sydney where food waste still goes in the red bin rather than the green bin. New State laws implement mandatory regulation for batteries and require brand owners to take responsibility for their products by ensuring batteries are safely collected, processed and recycled when they reach the end of life. Why can't this be done with other types of waste? Yes, implementation of preventative measures will require effort; doing the right thing rather than the easy thing often is. But that doesn't mean it isn't the right thing, and my family and our community are worth it.

BRUCE MAYNARD, before the Committee: I'm Bruce Maynard from the Narromine-Trangie area. I'm here to ensure that the Committee thoroughly investigates and properly reflects in its final report the experiences and lessons from the attempt at Narromine to establish a waste incinerator in 2023-24. The plan was for Narromine to receive 1.2 million tonnes of rubbish from all of the State capitals and other places along the Inland Rail. "Why Narromine?" the proponents were always asked. "Because of the Inland Rail" was the consistent answer.

What did we find out in our investigations as we fought off this proposal? We found out that the proponents, the Murray Darling Association, had conflicts of interest both at an organisational and personal level, pecuniary and otherwise; we found out that the EPA had tacitly green-lighted the progress of this proposal well ahead of any planning processes; and we also found out that the proponents themselves didn't even have a track record in building incinerators. All of those things have been found out, and we are happy to provide the corroboration of all of those statements to the Committee via Dr Cohn principally, first of all, because some of these issues go across and may be subject to other actions.

We would encourage the Committee to investigate far enough that it finds whatever connections and takes them to wherever they do lead, because the lessons for our experience in fighting off that proposal do extend to Parkes, in that they are examples of what has been happening behind the scenes, well ahead of any possibility. I commend the Committee to please fully reflect the Narromine experience so that it may inform other communities across New South Wales and Australia.

Mr BRAD FIELD, before the Committee: I've only just been given last-minute information that I'm allowed to speak. Sorry, I've got no words on paper other than about 15 on here. I am one of the closer residents to this proposed project, so I've followed this thing for many years now—a lot more than most people would think. I am strongly not in favour of this for a number of reasons, and one is the EPA. I've got no faith in the EPA. We have a pet food factory out there now, and the EPA has let us down. There is odour out of that which they have done nothing about, so that is one reason why I'm not in favour of it.

I've got no faith in the levels of government that have known about this thing for a lot longer than the residents of Parkes. I believe this project has been in the pipeline for a lot longer than Parkes residents have known about it. I believe the development of the precinct, in the planning stages—they had this sort of thing in mind, as you've heard from other people. This precinct was sold to the Parkes community to value-add the produce that is produced here. What we are seeing happening now is the total opposite. It is being used to import things. As we know, it's not of the finest quality. We are talking rubbish. I think you need to consider how this whole process has come about.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Field. That is your two minutes up.

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KAREN SKINNER, before the Committee: I wasn't registered to speak, but I don't have much to say besides the fact that this is 500 metres from my house. How would the Committee feel if you had it built 500 metres from your doorstep? The value of my property is going to be zip, zero, zilch. I would not want to buy next door to a smelter, and I would never assume anyone else would want to buy next door to a smelter. It's not just me; it's my neighbours as well. A lot of them still have mortgages. We are going to lose that much value on our properties that we can't even think straight. You really need to take into consideration the mental health effect that you are having on this community.

The CHAIR: That brings our formal proceedings to a conclusion. I thank you all for the respectful way in which you have engaged this afternoon and for sticking to the time limit as well. I know it's difficult to get a lot said in two minutes, but all of you who have come forward this afternoon most certainly have done that. We as the Committee and I as the Chair very much appreciate your input. We appreciate the opportunity to have been here with you, on the ground, to hear from you directly and have this engagement with you. It is a sign of our commitment. I know that many of you would be aware of the difficulties that the majority of the Committee had in arriving in Parkes—the joys of regional travel, as those of us who live in the regions know all too well. The flight was delayed and so most of the Committee didn't arrive until nine o'clock last night.

But it is absolutely our commitment to all of you—to your questions, queries and concerns—that we were here and able to do this and address you today. We appreciate very much the chance to have done so. As I mentioned earlier, there is a suggestion box just outside the door, so if there is anything further that you would like to add or any other contributions that you would like to make then I very much encourage you to do so. From the Committee's perspective, we'll take this all away in line with the evidence and the submissions that we have received to date and the hearings that we have coming up. We have another one on 4 May in Sydney and then we will also be having a public hearing and public forum similar to this in Goulburn on 14 and 15 May. We are doing everything we can to obtain as much information and direct engagement with local residents and regions as we possibly can. Thank you for your time and for hosting us all here. We very much look forward to staying in touch.

The Committee adjourned at 15:00.