



**FIONA HARRISON**

**OBJECT**

Submission ID: 215102

Organisation: N/A	Key issues: Social impacts, Visual impacts, design and landscaping, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses), Traffic, Other issues
Location: New South Wales 2577	
Attachment: N/A	

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*Yiradhu marang, that's "good day" in the Wiradyuri language of my old people.*

*My name is Fiona Harrison. I am a Wiradyuri woman living off Country but feel deeply privileged to call Gundungurra Land my home. This land drew me in with its cool climate, lush greenery, and unique biodiversity.*

*I am 62-years old, and a resident of Eloura Lane, Moss Vale. My home is 0.7km away; that's less than one kilometre away from the proposed Plasrefine facility as the crow flies.*

*My connection to Country is both Cultural and spiritual. As an Aboriginal woman, I am guided by the principle of caring for the land, the animals, the waterways, and the people who rely on them. This proposed facility undermines all those obligations. It threatens not only the environment and community health but also Aboriginal heritage and my personal wellbeing as someone living with early stage Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).*

#### **CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DUTY TO CARE FOR COUNTRY**

*The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP) for the Plasrefine site is deferred until after project approval. This sequencing is deeply troubling. It reduces the preservation of Gundungurra heritage to a secondary concern and demonstrates a lack of genuine respect for First Nations knowledge and Culture. Aboriginal heritage is not just about protecting artefacts—it is about safeguarding the stories, connections, and knowledge embedded in the land.*

*When Indigenous Australians speak of 'Country,' we refer to its physical, spiritual, and Cultural dimensions. The interconnectedness of all living things is at the heart of our identity. Projects like Plasrefine, which prioritize industrial profit over ecological harmony, perpetuate historical harms.*

*There ARE Aboriginal people living in Moss Vale, and there ARE Aboriginal people living across the Southern Highlands. If more of us have not come forward to speak to your IPC Committee, it is not because we don't care. It is because it is not safe for us to step up and out in front of people. And it's become even more unsafe since the No vote in the Referendum last year. We do care, deeply; but we are not safe within the systemic racism embedded in Australian mindset.*

*Announcing Public meetings, whether in person or virtually, and believing that Aboriginal people will attend, shows a total lack of understanding of the history of treatment of Aboriginal people when we try to protect Country, and about what happens when we do step up to speak out. We are vilified, ridiculed and shut down.*

*If the Independent Planning Committee were genuinely interested in engaging with the local Aboriginal Community in the Southern Highlands, you would have reached out to the influential Aunties in this area and organised a private meeting. The Aunties would have ensured representation by our people to a meeting with your committee. By not doing this you left us vulnerable and alone. This has been a huge disrespect by the Independent Planning Committee.*

#### **HEALTH IMPACTS**

*The Reality for Indigenous Communities:*



*Close the Gap studies show that systemic neglect of Indigenous health and wellbeing is linked to environmental degradation and land mismanagement. The destruction of sacred sites and ecological harm contributes to the Cultural disconnection and poor health outcomes experienced by many Aboriginal people. Approving Plasrefine without first addressing its impact on Cultural heritage would compound these systemic injustices.*

*Chronic health issues like COPD and Asthma are disproportionately common in Aboriginal communities. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, respiratory conditions are a leading cause of morbidity among Aboriginal Australians, exacerbated by environmental pollution and industrial development near our communities.*

*The processes proposed at Plasrefine—shredding, granulating, extrusion, and pelletizing—release hazardous pollutants, including dust, microplastics, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Exposure to these emissions can exacerbate COPD, asthma, and other respiratory illnesses. GHD's suggestion that residents mitigate these risks by staying indoors with windows shut for hours each day is impractical and Culturally insensitive.*

*Indigenous people like me derive emotional and spiritual strength from nature. Confining me to my home, cutting me off from my garden and the stormwater easement sanctuary beside it, would harm my mental health and Cultural connection to Country. For someone living with PTSD, these spaces are not luxuries—they are lifelines.*

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL HARM

*The Plasrefine facility endangers critical ecosystems near the Wingecarribee River, just 10 meters from the proposed site. This river feeds into Warragamba Dam, Sydney's primary drinking water source. The risks of microplastic pollution and chemical runoff from wastewater are well documented. Any failure in the facility's filtration systems could devastate aquatic habitats and contaminate drinking water, perpetuating long-term harm.*

*The platypus, an endangered species, and the glossy black cockatoo, a vulnerable species, rely on these green spaces. Runoff, sedimentation, and construction will destroy their habitats. Once lost, these ecosystems cannot be restored.*

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

##### *Governance and Aboriginal Rights:*

*The previous Wingecarribee Shire Council was disbanded due to governance failures and dysfunction. This lack of accountability echoes broader systemic neglect of Indigenous concerns in planning processes. The failure to consult Aboriginal groups early and meaningfully reinforces a pattern of exclusion.*

*The Human Rights (Healthy Environment) Act, passed in Australia in 2023, recognizes the right to clean air, safe water, and a healthy environment. Yet, this project contradicts those rights, especially for Aboriginal residents like me. How can the NSW government reconcile this proposal with its obligations under this law?*

#### THE PERSONAL BURDEN OF PLASREFINE

*For me, this project is deeply personal. My garden and the stormwater easement beside my home are sanctuaries, where I connect to the land and nature, and find peace. Living less than one kilometer from the Plasrefine site, I am profoundly worried about the cumulative impacts on my physical and mental health.*

*COPD is a progressive illness, and exposure to even low levels of pollutants could accelerate its effects. The noise from shredders and extruders, the risk of foul odors, and the constant presence of heavy trucks will disrupt my ability to enjoy my home. As someone with PTSD, the loss of tranquility would be devastating.*



*This project's risks extend beyond health. It threatens my Cultural connection to Country, my sense of belonging, and my hope for a better future for all who call Gundungurra Land home.*

#### CONCLUSION

*Members of the Independent Planning Committee please step up and intervene to protect Country, People, and Future Generations:*

*The Plasrefine proposal is more than a planning application—it is a decision about the kind of legacy we leave for the seven generations looking up at us, waiting their turn to emerge. What kind of Ancestor do you want to be for these future generations?*

*The principles of caring for Country compel us to prioritize the health of the land, its animals, and its people. Approving this facility would harm not only Moss Vale but also the Cultural and ecological balance that sustains us all.*

*As an Aboriginal woman, I urge the Independent Planning Commission to reject this proposal. This is not the right site for such a facility. The risks to Cultural heritage, environmental safety, and community health are unacceptable. We can and MUST do better for the Southern Highlands and its people.*

*Reject the Plasrefine proposal to honour the land, protect its people, and uphold our collective responsibility to care for Country.*

*Signed,*

*Fiona Harrison*

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