

Primum non nocere – first, do no harm.

My name is Dr Jacqueline Duc. I'm a community member, a mother of two, and a proud member of the Southern Highlands Greens. I am speaking today on behalf of local doctors of the Southern Highlands.

I am a dual trained paediatrician and palliative care physician. For the past 12 years, I have cared for infants, children and young people who are dying, or living and suffering with life-limiting conditions. So when I tell you that I have seen tragedy – I have seen tragedy.

In medicine, we often consider our planning and management options in terms of numbers : statistics, possibilities, probabilities. But I'm not here today to talk to you about numbers – I'm here to talk about the fragility of life and the human condition, the delicate balance between life and death decisions – to talk about human compassion, moral conscience, and what it means to make decisions about other people's lives.

We talk about the 'precautionary principle' in medicine as in environmental science – a strategy for decision making when hard evidence regarding possible outcomes is lacking. In this instance, *we err on the side of caution*, taking all reasonable measures to avoid risks that are potentially serious, but possible.

Those that know me know that I am generally an extremely calm person – fairly unflappable in most situations, including those that involve work from cradle to grave. But like so many of you here today, I have lost sleep these last few weeks. I think most of my colleagues would agree with me when I say that losing sleep is actually not a bad yardstick for decision making in medicine, that is to say : will I rest easy and sleep tonight, knowing that the decision I made with my patient today was the right one?

Commission – I don't envy the job you have, as I'm sure you don't envy mine. But when we talk about the risk to human lives, we can propose that something "is unlikely to occur or have consequences." But what about the 0.1% chance that something horrific does occur? What risk is too great a risk to proceed? The potential risk of an uncontrollable fire in the context of this facility being *so close* to residential homes and a preschool is *emphatically unacceptable*. How many lives can we afford to lose? I would argue that one life, is one life too many.

I'm not sure if Nancy is here today (or online listening), but as a mother to another mother, I beg you to reconsider the current site of Plasrefine. As a person of Asian heritage, I understand the importance of

family, responsibility, of *miànzi* – of honour, dignity, of saving face. I understand the pressures that can come with family responsibility – of decisions that have already been made. It would be a great inconvenience to change tack, to work towards finding a better solution, a better and safer site – but not an impossible task. We do not want to be your *lìguǐ*, or *chuánsòng-guǐ*. We want to be your collaborative partner – your potential neighbour. We want to find a solution that will benefit us all.

In medicine – as in life – there are sometimes immense disagreements that prevent us from moving forward in any productive way or fashion. In these instances, we sometimes call upon our Ethics Committee. The rationale for this, is so that even if something goes wrong 5/10 years down the track, we can look back over the evidence and rest assured that we made *the best possible decision with the information we had at the time*.

When we look back at decisions made, knowing that we could have put this facility more than 150-200m away from residential homes, greater than 10m away from key riparian waterways that lead to Sydney – what will we say? To a class action, or a High Court of law - how will we defend ourselves? *How will we sleep at night?*

To the Independent Planning Commission – you are our Ethics Committee. You are here to not only take into account laws and regulations, but to make a technical and moral decision that may irrevocably change the lives and futures of those seated here in front of you today. I implore you to please consider this in your ultimate decision, and help us all sleep easier at night.

First, do no harm.

This is not the right site.

Thank you.