



PAMELA SPRUCE

OBJECT

Submission ID: 215235

Organisation: <i>Friends of Wingecarribee</i>	Key issues: <i>Social impacts, Visual impacts, design and landscaping, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses), Traffic, Other issues</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales 2577</i>	
Attachment: <i>Attached overleaf</i>	

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Submission as attached document

SUBMISSION TO IPC AGAINST PLASTICS RECYCLING IN SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Friends of Wingecarrabee (FOW) is a Southern Highlands community support group providing a voice to local, state and federal governments on matters that impact our communities. The establishment of a toxic plastics recycling facility in close proximity to residences, educational facilities and towns in an area zoned for light industry, innovation and research is the cause of considerable distress and fear in the community, which is justified, based on sound evidence of the potential for microplastic contamination of our airways, soil and waterways.

We understand the importance of plastics recycling, together with the economic advantages for the state, but to approve this large facility within 200 meters of residences, close to educational and childcare facilities, and immediately adjacent to a sensitive facility providing important medical research for Australia and the world, is both dangerous and irresponsible.

The final SIA, funded by the applicant, considers the most important issues are the visual impact and the change of environment. This is patently wrong! The main impact, and by far the most dangerous, is the high risk of contamination.

Harm to the environment of microplastics emitted into the air and into our waterways is widely acknowledged and evidence of the detrimental effect on humans, animals, insects, plant life and our food chain is cause for considerable alarm and utmost caution. The potential of exposing, not just the Southern Highlands community, but also Sydney through its water supply, to an unknown, unlimited amount of harm is reprehensible.

Approval by the DPHI does not adequately address **the health hazards linked to this project which, in our opinion, should have been the primary consideration in their decision.** We are told that the applicant has answered many concerns by adjusting his initial application. However, as an example, it is difficult to understand the difference between the original application and the modified version: how can they switch from 40.5 kl per day of water consumption to 5.5-15? How is the discharge of water reduced from 15.5 kl per day to 2.5-12.5? There is no adequate explanation of how this reduction in water usage will play out and this brings into question other amendments as well.

It is concerning that David Gamble, in his address to the panel on 12 November, said the roller doors would be open for **five hours a day**. This is contrary to the claim that processing will be entirely contained within the facility. The roller doors need to open for 50 trucks to enter and reopen for 50 trucks to leave. It challenges logic to believe they will not be left open at some point during entry and exit, **increasing** Mr Gamble's projected 5 hours per day; and there is no escaping the wind factor, well known in the Highlands. Truck banking and heavy increase in traffic on already overcrowded roads has been addressed in other submissions.

Clearly this proposed facility on this site is a gamble with the health, safety, comfort and wealth of the whole population of the Southern Highlands. The risks are too high and the consequences disastrous, socially, financially and politically.

Financial cost into the future for the health system, the government and the community is immeasurable. Overseas examples of consequences are playing out in lawsuits for harm done.

Right now, ExxonMobil is being sued by the State of California, accusing them of deceptively promoting **chemical recycling** as a solution for the plastics crisis. The lawsuit '*accuses Exxon/Mobil of misleading the public for decades about the sustainability of plastic, first by promoting traditional*

*recycling, despite knowing that plastic is functionally **not recyclable**, and more recently by marketing advanced recycling as a cure-all. Advanced recycling uses heat or chemicals to break plastic down to its molecular building blocks but doesn't solve the environmental damage or health problems caused by the emission of microplastics and toxic chemicals in the process.*

The State of California is suing Coca-Cola and PepsiCo. According to the suit, *the beverage giants have failed to disclose to customers the presence of microplastics leaching from their plastic bottles into their products. While the full effects of microplastics on humans is still being studied, research points to 'troubling and dangerous consequences' the county said in its complaint.*

*Another study conducted in January 2024 by Columbia University and Rutgers University found 10% of the plastic particles in water were microplastics, while 90% were so-called 'nano plastics' that required advanced equipment to **even observe**, according to the complaint.*

Despite this research, the county said, PepsiCo and Coca-Cola have failed to disclose the presence of microplastics in their products or the harms, discussed above, that microplastics pose to the environment and human health.'

Last year 3M and Dupont agreed on settlements of \$10.3 billion for 3M and \$1.5 billion for Dupont as compensation in a class action against them for PFAS and PFOS leaching into land and waterways in the US. The settlement is the biggest ever against a PFAS manufacturer, but not likely to remain the biggest and certainly not the last, given the ubiquity of the chemicals and the harm they can do.

Whatever the settlement, it is too late for the communities that have been harmed.

(Time Magazine June 23, 2023).

The dangers of plastic recycling and microplastic pollution is well documented including a recent UK study in which a mixed plastics recycling facility was examined for the release of microplastics and found that between 6 to 13 percent of plastic processed in recycling may be released into water or the air as microplastics. No amount of filtration has prevented this.

A hazardous facility such as plastics recycling must be located in an area where a worst-case scenario will cause the least amount of environmental damage, well away from residences, towns and villages, water ways and food producing land. Wendy Tuckerman has offered an alternate, suitable site but the offer has been rejected by the proponent.

An example of appropriate location is the plastics recycling facility in Parkes which is well away from the town and residences, accessible by rail, and uses technology of a higher standard than the mechanical based technology proposed by Plasrefine.

Extensive evidence is emerging of the frightening effects of microplastics entering our waterways, seeping into our soil and subsequently into our food chain as well as escaping into the air we breath.

The potential exists for a catastrophe to occur, and it is impossible to guarantee the safety of the Southern Highlands community, or to protect Sydney's water from contamination.

The very existence of this project **at this site** will detrimentally affect the lifestyle of Southern Highlanders, put their health at risk, devalue their properties and contaminate their food chain.

This is not a gamble that can be taken, the government must take a stand!

As an addendum, Wingecarribee Shire Council's water treatment plant has just won the 2024 IXOM Best Tasting Tap Water award for NSW and ACT. Please IPC, don't approve its future contamination.



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WINGECARRIBEE

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