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OBJECT

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Location: <i>New South Wales NSW</i>	
Attachment: N/A	

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To the Independent Planning Commission,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed approval of the Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility in Moss Vale. This proposal presents significant risks not only to the natural environment and the local economy, but also to public health. In light of these risks, I strongly urge the Commission to reject this proposal and consider alternative, more appropriate locations for the facility.

1. The Growing Threat of Microplastics and Air Pollution

Microplastics are emerging as a critical environmental and public health concern. These tiny plastic particles, produced when larger plastics degrade, have been found in the air, water, soil, and even in the human body. Research published in Nature Communications and other scientific journals has shown that airborne microplastics are now ubiquitous in both urban and rural environments, raising alarm about their potential impacts on human health. Studies indicate that microplastics can be inhaled, potentially leading to respiratory and cardiovascular issues, as well as other long-term health effects. The World Health Organization has also identified airborne microplastics as an emerging public health issue, although much of their full impact is still unknown.

Recycling processes, particularly those that involve mechanical breakdown of plastics, generate microplastics. Given the nature of the proposed Plasrefine facility, which would involve significant processing and fragmenting of plastic materials, there is a high likelihood that airborne microplastics would be released into the local environment. In a region like Wingecarribee Shire, known for its clean air and proximity to agricultural areas, the widespread dispersal of microplastics could significantly compromise both the health of residents and local ecosystems.

Inhalation of microplastics is linked to various health risks, including respiratory irritation, asthma, and even systemic effects once these particles enter the bloodstream. Vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions, would be at a heightened risk. Furthermore, these microplastics could find their way into the food chain, as they have been detected in aquatic organisms and agricultural crops. The long-term health implications of such contamination are largely unknown, but the risks are significant enough to warrant serious concern.

2. Health Risks from Chemical Exposure and Toxic Air Pollutants

In addition to microplastics, the operation of a plastics recycling facility involves high temperatures and chemicals that can release a range of toxic substances into the air. The process of refining and melting plastics involves the use of chemical additives, which can release hazardous pollutants such as dioxins, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and other toxins. These substances are known to be harmful to human health, with long-term exposure linked to cancer, reproductive issues, and neurological damage.

Dioxins, for example, are highly toxic compounds that are produced when plastics are heated or burned. Even small amounts of dioxins can have serious health effects, including immune system suppression and developmental issues in children. VOCs released during the plastic refinement process can contribute to air pollution and are known to cause respiratory issues, headaches, dizziness, and eye irritation. Long-term



exposure to VOCs can also increase the risk of chronic conditions such as liver damage, kidney damage, and neurological disorders.

Given the proximity of the proposed facility to residential areas, schools, and agricultural land, the risks posed by these toxic emissions are particularly concerning. Residents, especially children and the elderly, could be exposed to harmful air pollutants on a daily basis, leading to a range of potential health issues. Local farmers could also be at risk if these toxins contaminate the air and water, affecting crop production and livestock health.

3. Water Contamination and Risks to Public Health

In addition to air pollution, the risk of water contamination from runoff is another major health concern. The facility's operations could release chemicals and toxins into nearby water sources through runoff or accidental spills. Wingecarribee Shire relies on clean water for both its agricultural industry and its residents' daily needs. Contamination of local rivers, groundwater, or irrigation systems could have serious consequences for local health and food safety.

Exposure to contaminated water can lead to a variety of health issues, including gastrointestinal illnesses, skin rashes, and long-term chronic conditions. If toxic chemicals or heavy metals leach into the water supply, this could present significant risks to both human health and biodiversity. For example, dioxins and other chemical byproducts from plastic processing are persistent in the environment, and their presence in the water supply could pose long-term threats to the health of both local communities and wildlife.

4. Impacts on the Local Economy and Public Health Care

In addition to the direct health risks posed by the facility, there are also broader economic implications to consider. The introduction of an industrial facility like Plasrefine would strain local public health resources, as the incidence of respiratory issues, chemical exposure, and waterborne diseases could increase in the surrounding community. This would place additional pressure on local healthcare services, already stretched in rural areas, as residents seek treatment for conditions linked to pollution, including asthma, allergies, and other respiratory problems.

The economic impact of increased healthcare costs, combined with the potential for reduced property values and diminished tourism, could create a significant economic burden on local communities. The ripple effect on local businesses, especially in the tourism and hospitality industries, could further exacerbate economic challenges in the region.

5. Impact on Property Values and the Local Economy

The introduction of a large industrial facility in a region known for its natural beauty and rural character would likely lead to a decline in property values. Moss Vale and surrounding areas are highly desirable for their rural lifestyle, clean air, and proximity to nature. Many local residents have invested in the area because of its environmental appeal and high quality of life. The proposed facility would undermine this, potentially leading to a significant decrease in property values as buyers and renters seek to avoid the negative impacts of industrialization.

Additionally, Wingecarribee Shire relies heavily on tourism, a key driver of its economy. The natural beauty of the area—its clean air, rural character, and outdoor recreational opportunities—attracts thousands of visitors each year. The establishment of an industrial facility would likely deter tourists, damaging local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, wineries, and outdoor tour operators, who rely on the influx of visitors for their livelihoods. A decline in tourism would have a cascading effect on the local economy, further exacerbating the financial strain on the community.

6. Availability of More Appropriate Alternative Sites



One of the most compelling reasons to reject the proposal is the availability of alternative, more suitable sites for this type of facility. Wingecarribee Shire is a region known for its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. It is not appropriate to site an industrial-scale recycling facility in such a sensitive and ecologically valuable area, particularly when more suitable industrial zones exist elsewhere in the state.

Alternative locations, far removed from residential, agricultural, and tourism-dependent areas, would better accommodate the industrial nature of the facility while minimizing the risks to health, property values, and the local economy.

Conclusion

The proposed Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility presents significant health risks, including exposure to microplastics, toxic air pollutants, and water contamination, which could harm both human health and the environment. The facility also poses economic risks, particularly to local property values and the tourism industry, which are vital to the region's economy. Given the availability of more appropriate sites, I strongly urge the Independent Planning Commission to reject this proposal in favor of more sustainable, health-conscious, and economically viable alternatives.

Our community deserves to live in a healthy, sustainable environment where public health is prioritized, the economy is supported, and the natural beauty of the region is preserved for future generations. I trust that the Commission will make the right decision to protect the long-term wellbeing of Wingecarribee Shire.

Thank you for your consideration.


