



PETER RITCHIE

OBJECT

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Organisation: N/A	Key issues: Social impacts, Visual impacts, design and landscaping, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses)
Location: New South Wales 2120	
Attachment: N/A	

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I vehemently oppose the plan to build a plastics recycling facility in Moss Vale. I was lucky enough to be born and raised in the clean, green Southern Highlands. I now live in Sydney with my partner, but we visit my mother in Bowral often. We enjoy the pristine environment and artisan produce of The Highlands and have considered moving back one day, to raise a family. If the Plasrefine proposal goes ahead, we will not be doing this.

I work in the legal/ risk and compliance department at one of the big 4 banks. Despite their verbiage, GHD's written and spoken responses to community concerns lack substance and do not appear to be based on scientific rigour, research and analysis. Just a few of the many examples repeatedly highlighted by the community include GHD's nonsensical and/or contradictory statements over roller door operations, stack height, fire management and mitigation of air and water pollutants. In turn, the DPHI's response does not challenge any of these weak statements. The Department has been quick to accept and recommend this project proceed.

When I saw the suggestion from GHD for local residents wishing to avoid air pollutants to 'limit time outside' I honestly thought this was satire. Can you imagine if Westpac, CBA, Woolworths, Medibank, Optus, or any other Australian institution made a similar statement about one of their projects? The media would have an absolute field day, with calls for CEOs resignations, parliamentary enquiries or even royal commissions. If this statement was submitted for review in my department, not only would it be outright rejected in the first draft for flagging 'Extreme' on reputational/brand impact, but the person who suggested it would likely have 'feedback' provided to their manager (if not put on an official performance plan for suggesting something so outrageous and wasting everyone's time).

GHD's statement during an initial community consultation in 2021 sounds like a line from the CCP playbook or 1984 - The Prequel: 'Yes, there are green rolling hills, there are cows in the paddocks, I get that, but this is going to change, it will not be rural land anymore but it will be employment generating land'. This indicates an extreme lack of understanding of community concerns and Australian values.

The fact that these statements did not prevent the project from passing corporate governance checks from both GHD and DPHI is, in my view, highly concerning.

Being a Sydney resident, my main concern is the fact that this facility would be situated in riparian zones within Sydney catchment area, approximately 10m either side of the building, to streams that feed into the Wingecarribee River. There is high potential for water run-off containing microplastics to enter the Wingecarribee River, Warragamba Dam and thus Sydney's drinking water. Water filtration processes can and do fail. Microplastics have theoretical potential for multiple medical health issues. I certainly don't want me or my family to ingest more of them.

In Australia, a new human rights amendment bill to the legislative assembly was passed on 26 October 2023. This law obligates the government to address harm and to fulfil the rights to health, clean air, safe water, non-toxic environments to live in and a healthy ecosystem. (See https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/b/db_68569/). How will our state government address this paradoxical issue of our legislation being at odds with their recommendation to approve this enormous plastics recycling facility with such high potential to pollute our drinking water (and air quality)?



In conclusion, I believe that the Government ideally needs to focus its attention on reducing plastics production, rather than allowing millions of plastic bottles/packaging to be produced with no good solution for dealing with the consequences.

Any interim solutions such as plastics recycling, must have the same scrutiny (if not more, given the potentially devastating environmental impacts) applied to other industries in Australia.

There must be reasonable exclusion zones which prevent these facilities from being constructed in residential and water catchment areas, and community feedback must be considered. Please find a safer, more sensible site, away from townships and away from the Sydney water catchment area.
