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OBJECT

Submission ID: 207177

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 2576	
Attachment: N/A	

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To the Independent Planning Commission:

I am writing to formally object to the approval of the Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility in Moss Vale. This submission is based on significant environmental concerns regarding the facility's potential to exacerbate plastic pollution in the region, particularly through the release of microplastics into the air and water, as well as the risk it poses to the ecological integrity of the Wingecarribee Shire.

1. The Dangers of Microplastics in the Air

Emerging scientific research has raised serious concerns about the presence of microplastics in the atmosphere. These microscopic particles, primarily from the degradation of larger plastic items, are now being detected in both urban and rural environments, presenting substantial risks to human health and the environment. A recent study in Nature Communications found that microplastics have become ubiquitous in the air, and there is evidence that they can be inhaled, posing respiratory risks.

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. The World Health Organization has also flagged airborne microplastics as an emerging public health concern, yet their full impact is still not entirely understood.

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Given the nature of plastic recycling facilities, there is a high likelihood of releasing airborne microplastics, which will further contribute to this already growing problem. Studies have shown that during recycling, fragmentation and abrasion of plastics can lead to microplastic emissions into the surrounding environment.

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. In a beautiful area like Wingecarribee Shire, which is known for its natural landscapes, these particles could be dispersed widely, affecting the local flora, fauna, and residents.

2. Environmental Destruction of a Unique Region

The Wingecarribee Shire is an area of outstanding natural beauty, characterized by rich agricultural lands, pristine ecosystems, and close-knit rural communities. Moss Vale and its surroundings attract visitors and residents due to the region's ecological richness and scenic landscapes. Introducing an industrial facility like Plasrefine, which brings increased traffic, potential pollution, and ecological risks, threatens to degrade this cherished environment. The risk of soil and water contamination is especially concerning, given the area's agricultural and residential uses.

Proactive environmental conservation, rather than permitting industrial refinement of plastics, should be the priority. Allowing the Plasrefine project to proceed would set a dangerous precedent for prioritizing industrial interests over the long-term sustainability of our natural landscapes.

3. The Need for Plastic Reduction, Not Refinement



While recycling may seem like a positive step in managing plastic waste, it is increasingly clear that recycling alone cannot solve the global plastic crisis. Instead, the focus should shift to reducing plastic production and use, particularly single-use plastics. Studies have shown that the global plastics industry is growing at an unsustainable rate, and recycling infrastructure alone cannot keep pace with this growth.

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. Moreover, plastic recycling is often a downcycling process, where plastics are reprocessed into products of lower quality, ultimately delaying, not preventing, their entry into the waste stream.

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We must focus on proactive measures, such as reducing the production and use of plastics, incentivizing biodegradable alternatives, and enhancing systems to prevent plastic pollution at the source. Investing in plastic refinement, as this facility would do, perpetuates the problem by creating a market for continued plastic production. Wingecarribee Shire, with its strong community values and natural beauty, should be leading the way in reducing plastic dependency, not becoming a hub for refining it.

4. Impacts on Air and Water Quality

A facility of this nature is also likely to contribute to air and water pollution, which could severely impact the local environment and the health of residents. The process of refining plastics involves the use of chemicals and heat, which can release harmful toxins into the air. Additionally, run-off from the site could contaminate local water sources, threatening both human health and biodiversity. Given the proximity of homes, schools, and agricultural land, this is a serious concern for public safety and environmental stewardship.

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Conclusion

In light of the growing research on the harmful effects of microplastics, the risks posed to the natural environment of the Wingecarribee Shire, and the need to shift toward plastic reduction, I strongly urge the Independent Planning Commission to reject the Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility proposal. Our community deserves a sustainable, healthy future, and we should prioritize proactive solutions to the plastic crisis rather than industrial refinement.

Thank you for considering this submission.
