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OBJECT

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I am writing as a local business owner who provides counselling and mental health support to individuals and families in Moss Vale and the surrounding areas. My role as a counsellor is deeply intertwined with the fabric of this community. Every day, I work closely with individuals navigating the complexities of modern life stress, uncertainty, and change and I have a firsthand understanding of how these challenges are directly shaped by the environment and social networks surrounding them.

Moss Vale is not just a geographic location but a community embodying safety, support, and connection. These qualities are essential for fostering mental health, resilience, and personal growth. My work is built on the understanding that people thrive when their environment is stable, supportive, and predictable. As someone who is embedded in this community, I see how Moss Vale's unique character a blend of natural beauty, rural charm, and community cohesion provides a foundation for individuals and families to flourish.

I also live in this community with my young family. Like many others, we have chosen Moss Vale as our home because of its safe and nurturing lifestyle opportunities. My family depends on the qualities that define this town: a clean and tranquil environment, a sense of belonging, and the ability to live in harmony with our surroundings. These are not abstract ideas they are tangible aspects of daily life that impact everything from physical health to emotional wellbeing.

With this perspective as both a professional who supports the mental health of others and as a parent raising children here I feel a deep sense of responsibility to object to the proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. This facility represents a fundamental shift in the character of Moss Vale, and I am profoundly concerned about the risks it poses. These risks extend beyond the immediate physical and environmental concerns to include significant, long-term threats to the mental and physical health of the community, the sustainability of the environment, and the future wellbeing of Moss Vale as a whole.

The people of Moss Vale do not exist in isolation from their environment. As research has long demonstrated, mental health is directly influenced by external factors such as air and noise pollution, visual landscapes, and the overall quality of the spaces where we live and work. A peaceful, clean, and cohesive environment contributes to lower levels of stress, reduced anxiety, and better emotional regulation.

Conversely, industrial developments, particularly those that introduce significant noise, pollution, and traffic, increase stress levels, erode community trust, and create feelings of powerlessness and frustration among residents.

Introducing this facility threatens to undermine the foundations of what makes Moss Vale a safe and supportive place to live. For individuals already coping with mental health challenges, the added stressors created by this development such as noise pollution, the visual impact of industrial structures, and concerns about air and water quality could exacerbate their conditions. For families like mine, the loss of Moss Vale's tranquillity would mean the loss of a critical source of stability and wellbeing.

The proposed development also poses a significant risk to community cohesion. One of the defining features of Moss Vale is its sense of connection and shared identity. This is where people know their neighbours, and small businesses like mine thrive because of our relationships. Families feel they are part of a more extensive, supportive network. Industrial developments often have the unintended consequence of creating divisions within communities between those who support the project for perceived economic benefits and those who



oppose it due to environmental and health concerns. Such divisions can weaken the social fabric, reducing trust and collaboration among residents.

Additionally, the facility would likely substantially change Moss Vale's physical and sensory environment. Noise from machinery and heavy vehicles, increased traffic congestion, and potential odours from the recycling process would all contribute to degrading the town's atmosphere. These changes are not minor inconveniences they are disruptions that can fundamentally alter how people experience their daily lives. Noise pollution alone has been shown to disrupt sleep patterns, increase stress hormone levels, and impair concentration and cognitive function. For a community like Moss Vale, which values peace, these disruptions would profoundly impact mental health and quality of life.

The environmental risks associated with the facility also have far-reaching implications for mental health. Concerns about air and water pollution, microplastics, and the potential for industrial accidents such as fires would create a pervasive sense of uncertainty and anxiety among residents. Parents, in particular, would be burdened with the worry that their children might be exposed to harmful substances, whether through the air they breathe, the water they drink, or the soil in which local food is grown. This kind of chronic, low-level stress is insidious, affecting not only individual mental health but also the collective mood and outlook of the community.

For my family, raising children in an environment where these risks are present is deeply troubling. Like many families in Moss Vale, we have made a conscious decision to live here because of its opportunities for a healthy and balanced lifestyle. We value the ability to spend time outdoors, to breathe clean air, and to enjoy the simple pleasures of rural life. The proposed facility threatens to strip away these opportunities, replacing them with an industrial presence incompatible with the community's needs and values.

Finally, it is crucial to recognise that the impacts of this development would not be evenly distributed. Vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions, would bear the brunt of the adverse effects. Children are particularly susceptible to the consequences of environmental degradation, as their developing bodies and minds are more vulnerable to pollutants and stressors. For elderly residents, the added noise, traffic, and air quality concerns could lead to increased isolation and reduced mobility. As a counsellor, I am acutely aware of how these issues compound over time, creating long-term challenges that are difficult to address once the damage has been done.

Mental Health: A Critical and Overlooked Impact

As a mental health professional, I have extensive experience working with individuals whose wellbeing is directly shaped by their environment. It is essential to emphasise that the proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility can potentially create significant, long-term mental health challenges for residents. These challenges extend far beyond the immediate physical implications of industrial development, touching the psychological and emotional core of what makes Moss Vale a safe, supportive, and harmonious place to live.

1. Chronic Stress and Anxiety from Industrial Proximity

Industrial developments are often associated with chronic stress due to the unavoidable disruptions they introduce daily.

- Noise Pollution:

The constant noise generated by trucks, machinery, and industrial operations is a persistent irritant that can disrupt even the most fundamental aspects of daily living. Sleep disturbances caused by noise are particularly concerning, as they can lead to fatigue, irritability, and diminished cognitive function over time. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to heightened anxiety, increased stress hormone levels, and a reduced ability to regulate emotions.



For residents already managing mental health conditions, these disruptions exacerbate feelings of unease, creating an additional burden on individuals who rely on a quiet, stable environment for emotional recovery. Families with young children may find it especially difficult to establish routines, further compounding stress and strain on relationships.

- *Odours and Air Quality Concerns:*

Plastics recycling facilities often emit unpleasant odours and pollutants that can permeate residential areas. These odours are a constant reminder of industrial proximity, making it impossible for residents to feel comfortable or at ease in their homes.

Compounding this discomfort is the fear of long-term exposure to harmful substances. For parents, the thought of their children inhaling polluted air daily is a source of chronic anxiety, as is the uncertainty surrounding potential health impacts. This constant vigilance and concern lead to a heightened state of stress, which can spill over into other areas of life, including work, relationships, and overall mental health.

2. Impact on Vulnerable Populations

The mental health consequences of industrial developments are not evenly distributed. Vulnerable groups, such as children and older residents, are disproportionately affected, both psychologically and physically.

- *Children:*

Children are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of environmental stressors. Exposure to polluted environments during critical developmental periods has been linked to behavioural problems, learning difficulties, and increased anxiety. These impacts are not merely short-term; they can affect children's ability to thrive academically and socially, leading to long-lasting consequences for their emotional wellbeing.

A child's environment shapes their sense of safety and security. Growing up in a community with degraded air quality, noise pollution, and industrial activity denies children the nurturing and stable environment they need to flourish.

- *Older Residents:*

Seniors often have heightened sensitivity to environmental stressors such as noise and air pollution, which can exacerbate physical health conditions and limit mobility. These factors contribute to increased social isolation, as older residents may feel less comfortable spending time outdoors or participating in community activities.

Social isolation is a significant risk factor for mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, particularly in older populations. By introducing new barriers to community engagement, the facility would disproportionately impact the mental and emotional wellbeing of this vulnerable demographic.

3. Community Cohesion and Social Stress

Moss Vale thrives on its sense of community and connectedness a vital factor in supporting mental health and resilience. Industrial developments, however, can disrupt this cohesion in multiple ways.

- *Divisions Among Residents:*

The contentious nature of industrial developments often creates divisions within communities as residents debate such projects' perceived benefits and drawbacks. This polarisation undermines the collective trust and solidarity that form the backbone of a thriving community.

- *Security Concerns:*



Introducing transient workers and increased industrial traffic can lead to a diminished sense of safety and security within the community. When residents no longer feel secure in their surroundings, they are less likely to engage in social activities, further eroding the community's bonds.

- *Reduced Opportunities for Interaction:*

The physical and sensory disruptions caused by industrial developments, including noise, traffic, and visual blight, discourage outdoor activities and social gatherings. These shared experiences are essential for fostering resilience and connection, and their loss would profoundly impact the community's ability to weather challenges together.

4. Long-term Psychological Burden

Perhaps the most insidious impact of this development is the long-term psychological burden it imposes on residents.

Living near a facility associated with risks such as pollution, fire, and industrial accidents creates a pervasive sense of fear and helplessness. This sense of dread is not confined to moments of crisis; it becomes an enduring aspect of daily life. Residents may find themselves constantly on edge, worried about potential harm to their health, families, and property.

Chronic stress of this nature undermines overall quality of life, leading to feelings of frustration, anger, and despair. Over time, these emotions can erode trust in public institutions, as residents feel their concerns are ignored in favour of industrial interests. This erosion of trust further alienates individuals from their community, compounding the mental health challenges they face.

Microplastics: A Growing Threat

The presence of microplastics in our environment is an escalating concern. Plastics recycling facilities, despite their intended purpose, are a documented source of microplastic pollution through:

- *Airborne Particles: Tiny plastic particles can become airborne during the shredding, melting, or processing stages of recycling. Inhalation of these particles has been linked to respiratory and inflammatory conditions.*

- *Water Contamination: Runoff from industrial facilities often carries microplastics into local water systems, contaminating rivers and creeks as essential resources for residents and agriculture.*

Microplastics have not only direct physical health impacts but also indirect mental health consequences:

- *Psychological Distress: The knowledge of environmental contamination, particularly when it threatens children, pets, or local wildlife, creates significant stress for residents.*

- *Erosion of Trust: Concerns about the safety of drinking water or food grown in the area can lead to a breakdown in trust in public institutions, compounding feelings of helplessness and frustration.*

Environmental and Economic Impacts with Mental Health Consequences

The proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility poses significant risks beyond immediate health concerns, intersecting with environmental and economic factors fundamental to the community's mental wellbeing. The environment and economy are not abstract concepts; they are deeply intertwined with the daily lives of Moss Vale residents, shaping their sense of safety, security, and satisfaction. This section explores how environmental degradation, economic disruption, and traffic impacts will harm the mental health of individuals and families in Moss Vale.

1. Environmental Degradation



Moss Vale's natural environment is a cornerstone of its identity and a vital contributor to the mental health of its residents. Access to clean air, green spaces, and natural beauty is more than a luxury it is essential for psychological wellbeing. Research consistently shows that environments rich in greenery and free from pollution reduce stress, enhance life satisfaction, and improve emotional regulation.

The proposed facility jeopardises these benefits in several ways:

- *Air Pollution:*

Plastics recycling facilities are known sources of air pollution, emitting particulates, chemicals, and odours that degrade air quality. For Moss Vale residents, this would mean an increase in respiratory issues and a constant reminder of industrial intrusion, leading to heightened anxiety and stress. Parents, in particular, would worry about the long-term effects on their children's health, creating a pervasive sense of unease.

- *Habitat Destruction:*

The development of the facility and its associated infrastructure risks damaging local ecosystems, including the habitats of birds, pollinators like bees, and other wildlife. This loss is not just ecological; it also diminishes residents' restorative benefits from engaging with nature. The absence of vibrant, thriving ecosystems erodes the community's connection to its environment, reducing opportunities for outdoor activities that support mental health.

- *Risk of Fire and Industrial Accidents:*

Plastics recycling facilities have an inherent risk of fires, which can release toxic fumes and cause widespread panic. The constant fear of such accidents creates anxiety for residents, particularly those living nearby. This sense of vulnerability undermines the psychological safety that Moss Vale currently provides.

These factors threaten to transform Moss Vale's natural environment from a source of pride and wellbeing into a source of stress and uncertainty.

2. Impact on the Local Economy

The economy of Moss Vale is intrinsically tied to its environment, with tourism, agriculture, and small businesses relying on the town's rural charm, clean air, and natural beauty. Introducing an industrial facility risks destabilising this balance, with far-reaching consequences for residents' financial and mental wellbeing.

- *Tourism:*

Moss Vale attracts visitors seeking a peaceful, picturesque escape. Tourists are drawn to its rolling green hills, fresh air, and local businesses that embody the town's charm. A large-scale industrial facility threatens to deter these visitors, who may choose destinations with fewer environmental and industrial disruptions. The loss of tourism revenue would ripple through the local economy, affecting businesses that depend on seasonal visitors and damaging the town's reputation.

- *Agriculture:*

Moss Vale's agricultural sector is vital to its economy and identity. Farmers rely on clean water, fertile soil, and healthy ecosystems to sustain their operations. The risks posed by the facility pollution, microplastics, and water contamination could devastate local agriculture, from livestock to crops. The decline of essential pollinators like bees due to habitat destruction or air pollution would further compound these challenges, jeopardising not only food production but also the livelihoods of farming families.

- *Small Businesses:*

Businesses like mine, which provide services directly to the community, thrive on Moss Vale's stability and health. A significant industrial presence that disrupts the community's harmony deters tourism, and erodes



trust in the environment would force many businesses to reconsider their viability in the area. The loss of small businesses would hurt the local economy and reduce the sense of connection and belonging that supports residents' mental health.

The economic downturn resulting from these disruptions would exacerbate financial strain for residents. Economic instability is a well-documented driver of stress, depression, and anxiety, and the ripple effects of these challenges would undermine the overall resilience of Moss Vale.

3. Traffic and Road Safety

The significant increase in truck traffic associated with the proposed facility introduces another layer of disruption with clear implications for mental health. Moss Vale's roads, designed for rural and residential use, are ill-suited to the heavy vehicle traffic that the facility would generate.

- Safety Concerns:

Increased truck traffic poses a direct safety risk, particularly for families with young children. Parents may feel heightened anxiety about allowing their children to walk or cycle near busy roads, limiting outdoor play and exercise opportunities. This sense of insecurity creates additional stress for families and reduces the freedom and quality of life that Moss Vale currently offers.

- Noise Pollution:

The noise from heavy vehicles travelling through residential areas adds to the sensory burden of living near the facility. This disruption not only affects concentration and productivity but also contributes to chronic stress, mainly when residents cannot escape the noise in their homes.

- Longer Commutes and Frustration:

Increased traffic congestion caused by industrial vehicles would lead to longer commute times and daily frustrations for residents. These seemingly minor inconveniences accumulate over time, creating a pervasive irritation and helplessness that erodes mental wellbeing.

In addition to these immediate concerns, the physical and psychological toll of traffic-related stress would disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with mobility challenges.

A Vision for Moss Vale's Wellbeing

As a business owner and mental health professional, my work and my life are deeply connected to the values and wellbeing of Moss Vale. This community thrives on its unique blend of natural beauty, supportive relationships, and a shared sense of purpose. Development in Moss Vale should not only preserve these qualities but enhance them. It must align with the community's values and prioritise three core principles: health and safety, sustainability, and community cohesion. The proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility, however, fails to uphold any of these priorities, introducing risks and uncertainties that threaten to undermine the wellbeing of our town.

Health and Safety

At the heart of any development must be a commitment to safeguarding the health and safety of all residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable: children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions. These groups are disproportionately affected by environmental and industrial stressors and rely most heavily on the protective qualities of their surroundings to maintain their physical and mental health.

- Children:

For children, growing up in a safe and nurturing environment is fundamental to healthy development. Exposure to noise pollution, poor air quality, and the visual and psychological stress of living near an industrial facility



undermines their sense of security and wellbeing. Prolonged exposure to such conditions can lead to behavioural issues, heightened anxiety, and difficulty concentrating, all of which compromise their ability to learn and thrive.

- *The Elderly:*

Older residents are particularly susceptible to environmental stressors such as air and noise pollution, which can exacerbate existing health conditions, reduce mobility, and increase feelings of isolation. Industrial developments that disrupt the peace and accessibility of their surroundings threaten their physical health and diminish their quality of life.

- *Mental Health Considerations for All Residents:*

Health and safety are not limited to physical concerns. The mental health impacts of industrial developments are significant, as chronic stress from noise, pollution, and fear of accidents erodes emotional wellbeing. Residents deserve to live in an environment that promotes rather than detracts from their mental health, offering stability and peace rather than stress and disruption.

The proposed facility fails to meet this standard. Instead of prioritising health and safety, it introduces risks that disproportionately burden the community's most vulnerable members.

Sustainability

Moss Vale's environment is not just an aesthetic asset but a cornerstone of the community's identity, economy, and future. Sustainability must be at the forefront of any development to preserve the town's natural beauty, biodiversity, and resources for future generations.

- *Preserving Natural Beauty:*

Moss Vale's picturesque landscapes are integral to its character and appeal. The proposed facility risks disrupting this balance, introducing industrial structures, traffic, and pollution that degrade the visual and sensory quality of the town.

- *Protecting Air and Water Quality:*

Sustainability means ensuring that essential resources like clean air and water are not compromised. The potential for air pollution and water contamination from the facility raises severe concerns about the long-term health of Moss Vale's ecosystems. Pollutants from plastics recycling processes could seep into local waterways, harming wildlife and agricultural operations while creating persistent anxiety among residents about the safety of their environment.

- *Safeguarding Biodiversity:*

The loss of habitats for pollinators like bees and other wildlife due to industrial activity threatens not only the natural balance of the area but also the agricultural and economic systems that depend on them. Sustainability requires careful consideration of these interconnected elements, ensuring that development does not come at the expense of the natural systems that support life in Moss Vale.

By failing to prioritise sustainability, the proposed facility jeopardises the environment that residents rely on for their livelihoods, leisure, and legacy.

Community Cohesion

Moss Vale thrives on its strong sense of community a quality that must be protected and strengthened through thoughtful development. Any project in Moss Vale should aim to bring people together, fostering connection and collaboration rather than division and discord.



- *Reducing Social Divisions:*

Industrial developments often create polarisation within communities as residents debate the perceived benefits and drawbacks. These divisions weaken the social fabric, creating distrust and reducing the sense of shared purpose essential for resilience and mutual support.

- *Maintaining Safety and Trust:*

The presence of transient workers, increased industrial traffic, and other disruptions to the daily rhythms of life in Moss Vale could lead to reduced feelings of safety among residents. A cohesive community relies on trust and predictability, undermined when industrial activity intrudes on residential and rural spaces.

- *Supporting Shared Spaces and Activities:*

Outdoor activities, social gatherings, and community events are vital for building and maintaining strong social bonds. Noise, traffic, and environmental degradation from the facility would make these activities more difficult, discouraging residents from engaging with one another and reducing opportunities for connection.

The proposed facility does not align with the principle of community cohesion. Instead of contributing positively to Moss Vale's social fabric, it risks creating divisions, reducing trust, and eroding the connections that make this town a place of belonging and support.

The Proposed Facility Fails to Meet These Principles

The proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility falls far short when evaluated against these core principles health and safety, sustainability, and community cohesion. Rather than enhancing the qualities that make Moss Vale a desirable and supportive place to live, it introduces risks and uncertainties that threaten to undermine its foundations.

- *It compromises the health and safety of residents, particularly the most vulnerable, by exposing them to pollution, noise, and industrial hazards.*

- *It disregards the importance of sustainability, endangering the natural environment that supports Moss Vale's economy, biodiversity, and identity.*

- *It risks eroding community cohesion, creating divisions and reducing the quality of life that residents currently enjoy.*

A Positive Vision for Development

As a business owner and mental health professional, I believe Moss Vale deserves development that aligns with its values, supports its residents, and protects its future. Thoughtful, community-focused projects can enhance the town's strengths, fostering health, sustainability, and connection for future generations. The proposed facility, however, does not meet these criteria, and its approval would represent a step backward for Moss Vale.

Thank you for considering this submission.
