



JILL COCKRAM

OBJECT

Submission ID: 217769

Organisation: N/A	Key issues: <i>Social impacts, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses), Other issues</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales 2579</i>	
Attachment: <i>Attached overleaf</i>	

Submission date: 11/24/2024 6:11:11 PM

I am uploading my submission because I believe it will be too big to include in this space.

Jill Cockram

Submission Opposing SSD PlasRefine Plastics Recycling Facility – Moss Vale

My name is Jill Cockram and I spoke on Day 1 of the IPC in Bowral on 28th October, representing a local non-for-profit organisation of which I am a member: RegenAction Wingecarribee Inc. I have lived and worked in the Southern Highlands for 32 years.

This is my personal submission. I strongly oppose the imposition of a potentially hazardous heavy industrial plastics recycling facility in the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct. Here are my reasons....

Episode 40 (PFAS in Australia) Dr Mark Bowman GHD- At Clean-Up Conference 2022, Adelaide, South Australia Quote....

“It is fine to use a chemical that has been approved for commercial use but we need to ensure that unlike some of the challenges with PFAS where they have been dispersively released and haven’t controlled how we have used those chemicals that has been a key take-away. We need to really not let those chemicals out into the environment in the first place. It often doesn’t matter what the chemical is. We don’t want it in our drinking water. We don’t want them in our food. We want to have safe, breathable air. We want to have safe drinking water and it is best to ensure that we are not releasing chemicals into areas that we are using for food and water.”

Reference: (Quote from Dr Mark Bowman (Consultant with GHD) from the podcast in 2022 [REDACTED] by journalist and host Kayleen Bell. See omnystudio.com/listener or Omny Studio, Castbox, Podcast Addict, Podlink and Google podcasts

Perhaps Dr Bowman could practise what he preaches when working for GHD, supporting PlasRefine’s facility. He is suggesting: **First Principles: Do No Harm!**

MAIN ISSUE: LACK OF BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN A LARGE POPULATION OF PRE-EXISTING RESIDENTS AND THE TYPE AND SIZE OF THIS POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS PLASTICS PROCESSING PLANT.

AIR POLLUTION from Volatile Organic Compounds and micro-plastics.

- **Why hasn’t the NSW Health Dept submitted any concerns or Conditions of Consent to the NSW Dept of Planning, Infrastructure and Housing** about problems associated with siting of this large, polluting factory hard up against a population of 50,000 Shire residents, mostly living in the large towns and various villages within a 15km radius of the site as the crow flies? Current medical evidence indicates several known health impacts like cancer and Alzheimers disease resulting from the release of micro-plastics via the chemical washing and burning of a myriad of waste plastics in the recycling process? Then there is the inter-generational impacts of endocrine dysfunction, infertility and ill health

associated with ingested plastics via breathing the air, drinking the water and eating our polluted backyard-grown food.

- **Incorrect Zoning:** Zone E4 (Environmental Protection) adjacent to an Industrial Zone (the proposed site of Plasrefine). Surely, these two zones are totally incompatible in the same location - *Southern Highlands Innovation Park?*

CATASTROPHIC FIRE HAZARD

- **Incorrect Zoning:** Even though **the current RFS Mapping shows that PlasRefine is sited in a zone designated as BUSH FIRE PRONE**, GHD keeps insisting that the outdated 2020 RFS mapping shows it is not in a fire-prone zone. This may be because in 2020 we had massive bushfires approaching Moss Vale from the south, north and east where, not only did many people lose their homes but the *Moss Vale Resource Recovery Centre* just up the road from the proposed site had a spontaneous combustion occur in their woodchip stockpile which could not be doused. It smouldered for days.
- **Potential for catastrophic plastics fire and resulting chemical smoke plumes.** There is plenty of available evidence in Australia and worldwide of disastrous plastics storage facilities or plastics recycling facilities, with their cache of stored chemicals, going up in smoke (one at *HUME* which burned for four days and couldn't be extinguished). We know firsthand about large fires making their own weather, pyroclastic clouds and catastrophic wind speeds which, teamed with the direction of the prevailing winds for much of the year, will send plumes of toxic smoke, plastic waste particles and VOCs across the three main towns of Mittagong, Bowral/Burradoo and Moss Vale. Possibly for days. It's a fact that our shire doesn't have sufficient fire-fighting capacity for the "new normal" bushfire let alone capacity or Hazmat equipment to fight a devastating plastics fire which fuels itself!

WHERE IN THE EIS IS THE COMPANY'S (OR THE DPIH'S) DISASTER

PREVENTION & MITIGATION STRATEGY when the inevitable finally happens?

Who is culpable?

WATER:

- **Wastewater Pollution :** PlasRefine states in its EIS that it will be using 20,000ltrs DAILY of fresh, potable drinking water from the Southern Highlands catchment in processing its plastics washing process. Our Wingecarribee Water has just won a prestigious award for the best tasting drinking water in the region. But 20,000ltrs/day will be instantly contaminated and create up to 16,000ltrs polluted wastewater DAILY. PlasRefine wants to reprocess this and eventually send it offsite to Moss Vale's Sewerage Treatment Plant to be dispersed further into our water catchment area at the ratepayer's expense.

- **The wastewater containing micro-plastics will** ‘apparently’ be put through a ‘cleaning’ process of some sort (chemicals?), the details of which are vague in the EIS. And once this wastewater is concentrated toxic water, it will **be drained downhill to an open holding dam onsite, prone to overflowing in flooding events** and spreading its toxic contents down slope to other businesses and farmland. If it doesn’t overflow in a flood, the company plans to truck the contents of the toxic dam off-site to be processed in a special toxic dump somewhere else. **Neither circular for the economy nor the environment.**
- **Sydney’s Drinking Water.** *The S.H.Innovation Precinct* is sited on sloping land dotted with freshwater springs and chains of ponds. Currently during flooding events, water cascades down the grassy slope and fills natural ponds or runs off to lower creeks and rivers, the larger being the *Wingecarribee River* which is one of the sources of Sydney’s water catchment at Warragamba Dam. By siting PlasRefine’s proposed 24/7 processing facility on this slope, micro-plastics will be directly dispersed into the water supply of millions of city people. What far-sighted society ever imposes such health risks on its population?
- **Flood – Watershed of rain in an episodic rain event.** PlasRefine says it is going to build a big holding tank under the buildings to catch all the storm water. Looking at the massive footprint of the combined roof area and concreted/tarmac area surrounding the buildings and the slope of the land, I believe it would be impractical/impossible to catch all the rainwater from an episodic heavy rain event. We can experience over 150mls (6”) of rain over two days, which is not uncommon lately. **When you multiply this amount of water with the combined square meterage of roof and pavement catchment area, I doubt whether a big enough containment area to catch all storm water can be built into the sloping ground beneath the buildings.** I also doubt it would be financially viable to build this holding bunker. Consequently, pollutant-laden stormwater overflow will be carrying microplastics and chemical emissions settling on the roof and surrounding land downhill to pollute the area below the site. GHD have stated that the huge roller doors would be open for an estimated **five hours DAILY** to allow the 50 trucks to load/unload. Can the company categorically state that while the roller doors are open for this amount of time there will be NO microplastics or other pollutants leaving the buildings to contaminate the site? Negative pressure or not? **Who is strictly policing that the doors are kept closed all day apart from for the minimal time (5hrs?!) required to unload the trucks?**

AIR POLLUTION:

- Life in an area experiencing regular **Temperature Inversions**.



Wikipedia: In [meteorology](#), an **inversion** (or **temperature inversion**) is a phenomenon in which a layer of warmer air overlies cooler air. Normally, [air temperature](#) gradually decreases as [altitude](#) increases, but this relationship is reversed in an inversion. **An inversion traps air pollution, such as smog, near the ground.** LochCarron,Scotland: Photo supplied:

The Southern Highlands experiences regular temperature inversions, especially in winter. **Pollutants like micro-plastics and VOCs will remain and settle over the local area, condemning residents to the increased risk of cancers and age-related diseases and children to life-long endocrine malfunctions.** Those people who spend much of their working life outside tending their crops – farmers, vignerons and market gardeners/farmers would likely be at a higher risk.

ECONOMICS:

- **A true circular economy is an economy that is sustainable environmentally, financially etc forever.** I understand why the Minns government would like some kudos for proposing a circular plastics economy. But what if it isn't truly circular, as with plastic recycling, where **the product gets toxic after the first round of treatment/recycling and at end-of-life needs to be trucked to a toxic dump elsewhere because it can't be recycled a second time.** That's not circular! The cycle is broken! And the resulting pollution is forever in the environment. This suggests we have to **STOP producing plastics** if it can't be continuously recycled due to toxicity.
- **The Southern Highlands already has a thriving economy - tourism and agriculture** - which provides lots of jobs to the area, not only for people who live here and don't want the 'commute to the city' lifestyle, but also for workers who

come up from Wollongong. There are numerous local small businesses which **employ locals and bring money into the shire**, rather than **send money offshore**. If this proposal is approved, this hazardous facility, sited so close to a pristine food-growing environment, could devastate the current local economy and a rural lifestyle for the benefit only of a few proponents. **Local wine, beef and fresh food businesses will be impacted** by resulting micro-plastic pollution in their product. Who's going to buy that for their family?

Finally, it needs to be said that the dishonest approach by the PlasRefine directors in hiring a company like **GHD, who have been disingenuous** in the information they have provided (or more likely, failed to provide and deliberately omitted) in the EIS and beyond, to both the NSW Dept Planning, Infrastructure & Housing AND the local community. Their charade of so-called "Community Liaison" has been lacking and disrespectful and doesn't inspire confidence that they will live up to their promises of creating a safe work environment for all who work and live locally.

Watching the video interactions between the IPC Commissioners and the DPIH representatives when the Commissioners sought to clarify questions posed by local speakers, I felt the responses from the departmental representatives were minimal and lacking in depth, suggesting a lack of due diligence. Public servants in this department surely have a duty of care to protect both the residents of NSW and their local environment from potential and irreversible harm, rather than allow sloppy (deliberate or otherwise) or inadequate attention to detail from the applicant.

When politicians at local Council, State and Federal level all speak out against an inappropriate siting of a polluting and hazardous heavy industry, the Minister responsible should pay attention. We can't put the genie back in the bottle!

Our community trust you to do the right thing Commissioners

THIS IS NOT THE RIGHT SITE!

Thankyou for allowing our community to have a proper say in our future.

Jill Cockram

Exeter NSW (10kms from the proposed site)