



NAME REDACTED

OBJECT

Submission ID: 218070

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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SUBMISSION TO NSW INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION.

I wish to communicate my absolute opposition to the Plasrefine plastics recycling facility in Moss Vale which has been recommended for approval by the NSW Department of Housing, Planning and Infrastructure as a state-significant project (SSD9409987), despite having been rejected by Wingecarribee Shire Council. Our State and Federal Members of Parliament are against this proposal and, as you have heard, there is general widespread objection to the project within the community.

Having attended each of the recent Independent Planning Commission's meetings held in Bowral, and having watched the livestream of the third meeting, I concur with every single one of the points made to the Panel by the speakers in opposition to the project. This includes the two Wingecarribee Shire Council staff members, Michael McCabe and Susan Stannard, the Shire Mayor, Jesse Fitzpatrick, the four Wingecarribee Shire Councillors and the many dozens of concerned and knowledgeable citizens who were brave and passionate enough to stand up and speak on behalf of our community. On the other hand, I have found that the few speakers on behalf of the proponent have been defensive and totally unconvincing.

I believe that the project is totally inappropriate for the location which is near an area of agriculture and viticulture, within 100 metres of approved housing and 200m of existing housing. It is 200m from a day care centre and within 2 km from the schools and township of Moss Vale. It is on a flood-prone riparian zone with water flowing from the site through two creeks into the Wingecarribee River which supplies drinking water to Goulburn and, via the Warragamba Dam, to the wider Sydney area. It is a frequently windy area with the obvious potential for dispersal of contaminants across the whole of the Southern Highlands.

I believe that the NSW Independent Planning Commission needs to take into account a whole range of relevant and highly important factors which seem to have been ignored or dismissed in the DHPI recommendation. These include fierce opposition amongst the community, as well as the serious and well-founded fears about the negative effects of the project on the health and wellbeing of the people, animals (including platypus and microbats) and the waterways of the Southern Highlands environment, given the rapidly increasing international knowledge about the dangers of microplastics and toxic substances such as Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

The site is part of the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, SHIP, an initiative set up by Wingecarribee Shire Council, supported by a grant from the NSW Department of Regional Planning. The goal of SHIP is to enable the establishment of an innovative community of advanced manufacturing businesses, involving research, technology and training opportunities within an articulated series of low-rise buildings which would be more sympathetic to the nearby residential area than big-box heavy industrial concerns. A huge factory at least five stories high, emitting smells and highly toxic microplastics and chemicals, with hundreds of heavy and lighter traffic movements a day is definitely not an appropriate fit with the SHIP initiative. In fact, as noted in Day 2 of the Public Meeting, major potential investors have already turned their backs on becoming involved in the SHIP because of the Plasrefine factory project.

Using huge trucks to transport plastic waste from all over New South Wales and interstate to be recycled in a location close to homes, schools and agricultural land simply makes no sense. Other plastic recycling facilities in NSW are a fraction of the size of the Plasrefine proposal and they are sited further away from homes,



educational facilities and businesses. For example, the facility in Parkes has a buffer zone of at least 7 kilometres.

Because this is a relatively new area of technology, there is no reliable research indicating the rigidly-enforced environmental safety measures that would be necessary. We do not know who would have the responsibility of ensuring compliance. We do know that there is rapidly increasing international knowledge about the dangers of microplastics and toxic substances such as Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). International experiences raise serious alarm bells about the environmental impact of plastic recycling facilities. We also know that the NHMRC, the Australian Government's health and medical research funding agency, recently released proposed new drinking water guidelines which recommend lower values for PFAS in drinking water across Australia. Given that the NSW Government has welcomed these proposed guidelines, it is hard to comprehend why the same Government could recommend that such a large and potentially dangerous project should go ahead.

According to an investigation by the Sydney Morning Herald, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In the absence of any reliable history of the company's operation of any such facility in Australia, we believe that the State government is duty-bound to protect the health and safety of the community and the environment by refusing to allow the Plasrefine facility to operate in such close proximity to housing, schools, playgrounds, towns and waterways in an area of such important agricultural and environmental significance.

The social costs, through stress, worry and despair are incalculable. Residents are, quite justifiably, terrified about the health impacts of the inevitable microplastic and toxic PFAS chemical dispersal from the facility affecting the physical health of their families, their livestock and the water supply of both the local area and the Greater Sydney area. These concerns have not been addressed by the proponents or by the DHPI. To have had a consultant suggest that community objections and worries can be addressed by door-knocking and communication or by going inside and shutting the door is insulting to say the very least.

Aside from direct physical and emotional health impacts, there are significant worries about the noise, disruption pollution and danger from huge truck movements to and from the facility throughout the days, as well as hundreds of staff vehicles using local residential roads. Whilst a certain access road may have been specified, we have no way of knowing how this usage would be enforced and by whom.

The facility is planned to operate for 24 hours a day and the impact of noise and vibrations to those living nearby, as well as the deleterious effects upon the Garvan Institute's mouse-breeding facility just next door, don't appear to have been properly considered.

As well, there are major concerns about the proven high fire risk of this type of operation and the fact that the firefighting resources in our area are totally inadequate to cope with fires burning at 1200 degrees in such a confined area. The risks of such a fire spreading and also spewing toxic smoke throughout the area are simply horrendous. Fires in recycling facilities are notoriously common (19 in Australian plastic recycling facilities since 2019).

The presentation by the representative of the proponent on Day 3 of the Public Meeting was far from reassuring on this matter, or in fact, on any other matter. He claimed that there would not be any lithium batteries amongst incoming plastic waste because suppliers, such as councils' waste centres, would have removed them according to their contracts. It was clear that the Plasrefine operators would not be taking any responsibility.

Economically, the Southern Highlands depends heavily on primary production of food and wine and the impact of environmental harm on these operations does not appear to have been considered.

Other important economic impacts are the impact on local businesses, especially those which service the large number of visitors who come to enjoy the peaceful, green Southern Highlands. The inevitable dramatic drop in



visitor numbers which would occur if the facility went ahead would cause significant financial hardship and the loss of employment for far more people than the facility would employ.

As well, the desirability of the whole of the Southern Highlands as a place to live and raise their families would take a significant hit. Therefore, property values in the area would be significantly affected, reducing by at least 50% according to a very experienced local estate agent. This scenario would inevitably have a massive social, emotional and financial impact on residents “ all for the enrichment of foreign investors.

While acknowledging that New South Wales, and Australia generally, has a big problem with the accumulation of plastics and how to dispose of or recycle them, we firmly believe that policies should, as a priority, focus on how to reduce the use of plastics and, if needed, on placing smaller scale recycling facilities closer to railway lines and freeways, away from residential areas and townships.

Worldwide, there is a rapidly expanding knowledge base about the dangers to human, animal and environmental health from degrading plastics and from the current recycling methods. A recent broadcast on the BBC Assignment programme on 19th November 2024 presents the catastrophic human and environmental health situation in Malaysia which has been caused by plastic recycling, mostly of imported plastics. Importing plastic waste from interstate and distant parts of NSW to the chosen site in Moss Vale doesn't make sense logistically or environmentally and it would be deeply irresponsible for the NSW government to allow it.

Further to my point that it would be more constructive to have policies which reduce and limit the use of plastic in our communities, recent research work in Japan by a government-backed research institute called Riken, and the University of Tokyo has developed a plastic which can be dissolved in seawater in just a few hours. This vital work was reported in the Japan Times on 22 November 2024 and was undertaken with the goal of reducing environmental pollution, including that caused by microplastics. This research gives hope that there is a better way forward. Let us not rush into allowing a monstrous and filthy factory the purpose of which may soon be redundant.

On a personal level, we moved to the Southern Highlands around 35 years ago because of its clean, green environment and thriving small towns. We chose not to live in Wollongong where my husband worked because of the filthy emissions from the steelworks and other industrial facilities at that time.

Over the years, our children attended school then went away for further education. One daughter and her husband chose to settle here, buying a house, having a family and contributing to the community through their work and social connections. The other members of the family visit frequently. We are very concerned that our young ones will decide to move away, with the inevitable loss of their financial resources because of the devaluation of their home and the loss of family support from us. The separation from our grandchildren and their parents would be devastating for us. Our other family members would not be so keen to visit us so there would also be isolation from them.

We are retirees and although the environmental impacts of Plasrefine really worry us, we are not in a position to just walk away from our home and accept the inevitable huge financial loss that we would suffer at this stage of our lives, given that we do not have the opportunity to earn and recover such loss. In the meantime, we worry about our daughter's health and wellbeing, given that she works in a professional role in Moss Vale, less than 2 kilometres from the Plasrefine site. We also worry about our grandchildren who attend Oxley College roughly 4 kilometres from the Plasrefine site. The school is downwind from one of the prevailing wind directions and the children are playing outdoors for a significant part of each school day. They also play on the local sports fields and playgrounds. The threat to their health and wellbeing is immense.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the opportunity to make a submission about the Plasrefine project. I respectfully implore the members of the Independent Planning Commission's panel to recommend rejection of the application for all of the reasons outlined.
