



AMANDA COHN

OBJECT

Submission ID: 218489

Organisation: Greens NSW	Key issues: Social impacts, Visual impacts, design and landscaping, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses), Traffic, Other issues
Location: New South Wales 2000	
Attachment: Attached overleaf	

Submission date: 11/25/2024 4:39:26 PM

Greens NSW

SUBMISSION TO NSW INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

RE: State Significant Development (SSD-9409987) Proposal for Moss

Vale Plastics Recycling Facility

25 November 2024

Prepared by Dr Amanda Cohn MLC, Greens NSW Spokesperson for Waste

Introduction

The Greens NSW appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Independent Planning Commission opposing the proposed Plasrefine plastics recycling facility at Moss Vale (State Significant Development SSD-9409987).

The Greens NSW are a political party founded on the four key principles of ecological sustainability, grassroots democracy, social justice, and peace and non-violence. There are 61 local groups of Greens members in NSW, including the Southern Highlands Greens. The Greens are represented in the NSW Parliament by the Member for Newtown Jenny Leong, Member for Balmain Kobi Shetty, Member for Ballina Tamara Smith, Dr Amanda Cohn MLC, Ms Abigail Boyd MLC, Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC, and Ms Sue Higginson MLC. The Greens are represented in local government by 73 Councillors in NSW, including Councillor Heather Champion at Wingecarribee Shire Council.

The Greens are strongly supportive of NSW eliminating waste and building a more circular economy as soon as practicable. Reducing plastic production at its source is critical - action to reduce production must include product stewardship, so that companies that profit from single-use products and packaging, and that adopt strategies like planned obsolescence, bear responsibility for the problems they create. In the meantime, recycling is an essential part of a transition to a circular economy. Initiatives such as the Halve Waste program, a collaboration between Albury City Council, City of Wodonga, Federation Council and the Shires of Greater Hume and Indigo, which successfully diverted 50% of waste from landfill by 2020, demonstrate our ability to divert significant waste from landfill with collaboration, political will and community support.

The NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy Stage 1 2021-2027 includes a target to achieve an average 80% recovery rate of resources from all waste streams by 2030, and to reduce plastic litter items by 30% by 2025. In 2022-23, NSW generated approximately 891,000 tonnes of plastic waste, almost 110 kilograms per capita, but only 14% of that was recycled. Southern Highlands communities have expressed that they want to be part of the solution to this problem.

However, this particular proposal (SSD-9409987) is not the right solution. The proposed site is not suitable for a recycling facility of this nature and of this scale due to its location in a riparian zone and in proximity to residential areas, and significant concerns relating to environmental risk and fire safety have not been adequately addressed. It is notable that the recently elected Wingecarribee Shire Council opposes the proposal due to the "irreconcilable matter of unsuitable location." In its submission, the council stated:



Concerns regarding emerging contaminants such as PFAS remain unresolved in the Assessment Report. These unresolved and emerging risks may be considered acceptable in another location; however, the primary argument is that these risks are unacceptable in a drinking water catchment area, immediately adjacent to a first-order riparian corridor and to an extensive area of residential development.

Council certainly supports the broader vision and initiatives towards achieving a circular economy, including plastics recycling. However, in this case, the fundamentally irreconcilable matter of unsuitable location makes the SSD proposal untenable for our community and this Council.

Doctors for the Environment Australia have raised the unacceptable health and environmental risk of the proposal:

The current proposed site for the Plasrefine facility in Moss Vale, NSW, is an inappropriate and potentially hazardous location for a recycling facility of its size and nature. It poses unnecessarily dangerous risks to the immediate local environment of the region, the health and wellbeing of local residents and wildlife, and puts over 5 million individuals that access water from Warragamba Dam (Sydney™s primary drinking water catchment) at potential risk of increased micro and nanoplastics ingestion and other potentially hazardous chemicals that may be released from the facility in the event of a system malfunction.

Though not within the remit of the Independent Planning Commission, the Greens believe that government is best placed to manage waste to ensure accountability, transparency and true cost accounting of waste. NSW needs recycling infrastructure in appropriate locations that do not encroach on residential areas and do not risk human and environmental health. The Greens believe that the NSW government has a role to play in leading the development of this infrastructure through a state-wide strategy, and that the status quo of reliance on private companies making development applications will not deliver the infrastructure that is needed, nor the health and environmental outcomes that communities deserve.

Within the remit of the Independent Planning Commission, the Greens NSW recommend that proposal SSD-9409987 is rejected.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any part of this submission and can be contacted via the office of Dr Amanda Cohn MLC at [REDACTED]

Key Issues

Impact on waterways and riparian corridor

The proposed site is located within the Sydney drinking water catchment, and confirmed by the Environmental Impact Statement provided by the proponent, four ponds are located in the low points of the plastics recycling and reprocessing facility site, and two watercourses run along the western and eastern boundaries.

Environmental risks that have not been adequately addressed include micro- and nano-plastic pollution of waterways, the toxicity of proposed cleaning agents to aquatic environments, and emissions of PFAS. These also present risks to human health which have been articulated in detail in the submission from Doctors for the Environment Australia. There is no clear baseline assessment of the aerial, terrestrial, aquatic or sewer levels of microplastics, and there is no assessment of the human health or environmental risks of microplastics, including how microplastics combine with other pollutants to magnify those impacts. Finally, there is no clear discussion of the technologies, practices or discharge limits set for the emission of microplastics from the proposal.

A Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales is presently underway, with specific terms of reference relevant to the adequacy of monitoring and data collection, the health and environmental impacts of PFAS, the effectiveness of government engagement with affected communities, and the adequacy of New South Wales' legislative and regulatory framework in testing



for, monitoring, mitigating and responding to PFAS contamination. The approval of this development, particularly while this important work is underway, is an unacceptable risk.

*Further, the proposal includes significant biodiversity concerns which have not been adequately addressed, as it proposes to remove a stand of endangered endemic *Eucalyptus macarthurii*, as well as negatively impacting critical habitat for vulnerable species including platypus and the Eastern long-necked turtle. Wingecarribee Shire Council was recently granted \$500,000 for the Southern Highlands Platypus Conservation Project to monitor and collect data on the local platypus population. Additional biodiversity risks include habitat destruction for microbats and large bent-wing bats, the removal of tableland swamp meadows, and significant threats to birds, insects, reptiles, koalas, kangaroos and other wildlife reliant on the area's sensitive ecosystems.*

Fire and emergency management issues

The consequences of a fire at the proposed facility could be catastrophic, both in terms of spread and toxicity, given the plans to store up to 20,000 tonnes of plastic waste at the site. This has been well described in the presentations to the IPC given by Greg Hickling and Kylie Roberts Frost. In particular, specialist emergency services resources of the nature required for a fire at a facility of this scale are located over one hour away in Wollongong and Campbelltown, and the local retained fire stations are not adequately resourced to respond to a large, hazardous, industrial fire should this occur. The nearest permanently staffed stations are at Narellan (46 minutes away) and Albion Park (at least 49 minutes away).

The proponent, in Technical Report 5 - Fire and Incident Management Review, claims that the proposed facility is not on bush fire prone land, however this contradicts the NSW Rural Fire Service's mapping tool, which indicates that part of the lot is. A recent NSW Parliamentary inquiry by Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment identified that climate change adaptation measures are not adequately integrated into our state's planning processes. Given the escalating intensity and frequency of disasters including bushfire due to climate change, the real fire risk at this location may be even higher than indicated by current documentation.

Land use conflict

The location of General Industrial and Environmental Living zones adjacent to one another is extraordinarily unusual. Further, the proposal contradicts the Wingecarribee Shire Council's Southern Highlands Innovation Park Master Plan.

As stated by Architecture Republic, a sustainability-focused design practice based in the Southern Highlands:

The intent of the Development Control Plan (DCP) for the proposed site is to ~facilitate a transition between residential uses and heavier industrial uses across the northern parts of the Enterprise Corridor™ (Clause 2.2). While the development is technically exempt from compliance with the EC DCP as a State Significant Development, Section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (the Act) requires the Commission to take into consideration any relevant Development Control Plan. Even where specific controls from the EC DCP may not be applicable, the aims of the EC DCP to ~provide a clear framework for development in the Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor™ and ~to protect the amenity of surrounding rural and residential areas™ should be taken into account. A proposal of this scale and character clearly fails to meet these aims.

The proposed site is less than 200 metres from residential homes and the Australian Bioresources facility, 750m from an early childhood learning centre, and only 10 metres from riparian waterways that feed directly into Sydney's drinking water catchment. It is co-located next to agricultural zones and within habitat corridors for multiple local wildlife species.

The proponent has identified the potential for emissions of particulate matter and volatile organic compounds from the facility. Advice raised in public meetings that the proponent suggests residents stay indoors to



minimise the impacts of air emissions from the operation of the facility has rightly raised alarm for nearby residents. Though the applicant defends that this advice was taken out of context, and that the proposed facility is not expected to independently cause daily exceedances of safe particulate levels, it acknowledged the potential for exceedances on days when background pollution levels were already high.

On 30 October 2024, newly Elected Members of Wingecarribee Shire Council reiterated a 2023 resolution to formally oppose this proposal in its current location and form citing "long-term land use conflict issues".

Conclusion

In addition to the issues that the Greens have raised in this submission relating to environmental and human health risks, fire and emergency management risks and land use conflict, we note the substantial opposition to this proposal from residents, from the local council and from traditional owners. We note also that a number of objectors have offered their support to the proponent and to the government in identifying a more suitable site for this or any other proposals for recycling facilities. Southern Highlands communities, and the Greens, support the development of the infrastructure needed to urgently transition NSW toward a circular economy, and look forward to working collaboratively with the government to do so.

We recommend that proposal SSD-9409987 is rejected.



Greens NSW

SUBMISSION TO NSW INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

**RE: State Significant Development (SSD-9409987) Proposal for Moss
Vale Plastics Recycling Facility**

25 November 2024

Prepared by Dr Amanda Cohn MLC, Greens NSW Spokesperson for Waste

Introduction

The Greens NSW appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Independent Planning Commission opposing the proposed Plasrefine plastics recycling facility at Moss Vale (State Significant Development SSD-9409987).

The Greens NSW are a political party founded on the four key principles of ecological sustainability, grassroots democracy, social justice, and peace and non-violence. There are 61 local groups of Greens members in NSW, including the Southern Highlands Greens. The Greens are represented in the NSW Parliament by the Member for Newtown Jenny Leong, Member for Balmain Kobi Shetty, Member for Ballina Tamara Smith, Dr Amanda Cohn MLC, Ms Abigail Boyd MLC, Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC, and Ms Sue Higginson MLC. The Greens are represented in local government by 73 Councillors in NSW, including Councillor Heather Champion at Wingecarribee Shire Council.

The Greens are strongly supportive of NSW eliminating waste and building a more circular economy as soon as practicable. Reducing plastic production at its source is critical - action to reduce production must include product stewardship, so that companies that profit from single-use products and packaging, and that adopt strategies like planned obsolescence, bear responsibility for the problems they create. In the meantime, recycling is an essential part of a transition to a circular economy. Initiatives such as the Halve Waste program, a collaboration between Albury City Council, City of Wodonga, Federation Council and the Shires of Greater Hume and Indigo, which successfully diverted 50% of waste from landfill by 2020, demonstrate our ability to divert significant waste from landfill with collaboration, political will and community support.

The NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy Stage 1 2021-2027 includes a target to achieve an average 80% recovery rate of resources from all waste streams by 2030, and to reduce plastic litter items by 30% by 2025. In 2022–23, NSW generated approximately 891,000 tonnes of plastic waste, almost 110 kilograms per capita, but only 14% of that was recycled. Southern Highlands communities have expressed that they want to be part of the solution to this problem.

However, this particular proposal (SSD-9409987) is not the right solution. The proposed site is not suitable for a recycling facility of this nature and of this scale due to its location in a riparian zone and in proximity to residential areas, and significant concerns relating to environmental risk and fire safety have not been adequately addressed. It is notable that the recently elected Wingecarribee Shire Council opposes the proposal due to the "irreconcilable matter of unsuitable location." In its submission, the council stated:

Concerns regarding emerging contaminants such as PFAS remain unresolved in the Assessment Report. These unresolved and emerging risks may be considered acceptable in another location;

however, the primary argument is that these risks are unacceptable in a drinking water catchment area, immediately adjacent to a first-order riparian corridor and to an extensive area of residential development.

Council certainly supports the broader vision and initiatives towards achieving a circular economy, including plastics recycling. However, in this case, the fundamentally irreconcilable matter of unsuitable location makes the SSD proposal untenable for our community and this Council.

Doctors for the Environment Australia have raised the unacceptable health and environmental risk of the proposal:

The current proposed site for the Plasrefine facility in Moss Vale, NSW, is an inappropriate and potentially hazardous location for a recycling facility of its size and nature. It poses unnecessarily dangerous risks to the immediate local environment of the region, the health and wellbeing of local residents and wildlife, and puts over 5 million individuals that access water from Warragamba Dam (Sydney's primary drinking water catchment) at potential risk of increased micro and nanoplastics ingestion and other potentially hazardous chemicals that may be released from the facility in the event of a system malfunction.

Though not within the remit of the Independent Planning Commission, the Greens believe that government is best placed to manage waste to ensure accountability, transparency and true cost accounting of waste. NSW needs recycling infrastructure in appropriate locations that do not encroach on residential areas and do not risk human and environmental health. The Greens believe that the NSW government has a role to play in leading the development of this infrastructure through a state-wide strategy, and that the status quo of reliance on private companies making development applications will not deliver the infrastructure that is needed, nor the health and environmental outcomes that communities deserve.

Within the remit of the Independent Planning Commission, the Greens NSW recommend that proposal SSD-9409987 is rejected.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any part of this submission and can be contacted via the office of Dr Amanda Cohn MLC at [REDACTED]

Key Issues

1. Impact on waterways and riparian corridor

The proposed site is located within the Sydney drinking water catchment, and confirmed by the Environmental Impact Statement provided by the proponent, four ponds are located in the low points of the plastics recycling and reprocessing facility site, and two watercourses run along the western and eastern boundaries.

Environmental risks that have not been adequately addressed include micro- and nano-plastic pollution of waterways, the toxicity of proposed cleaning agents to aquatic environments, and emissions of PFAS. These also present risks to human health which have been articulated in detail in the submission from Doctors for the Environment Australia. There is no clear baseline assessment of the aerial, terrestrial, aquatic or sewer levels of microplastics, and there is no assessment of the human health or environmental risks of microplastics, including how microplastics combine with other pollutants to magnify those impacts. Finally, there is no clear discussion of the technologies, practices or discharge limits set for the emission of microplastics from the proposal.

A Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales is presently underway, with specific terms of reference relevant to the adequacy of monitoring and data collection, the health and environmental impacts of PFAS, the effectiveness of government engagement with affected communities, and the adequacy of New South Wales' legislative and regulatory framework in testing for, monitoring, mitigating and responding to PFAS contamination. The approval of this development, particularly while this important work is underway, is an unacceptable risk.

Further, the proposal includes significant biodiversity concerns which have not been adequately addressed, as it proposes to remove a stand of endangered endemic *Eucalyptus macarthurii*, as well as negatively impacting critical habitat for vulnerable species including platypus and the Eastern long-necked turtle. Wingecarribee Shire Council was recently granted \$500,000 for the Southern Highlands Platypus Conservation Project to monitor and collect data on the local platypus population. Additional biodiversity risks include habitat destruction for microbats and large bent-wing bats, the removal of tableland swamp meadows, and significant threats to birds, insects, reptiles, koalas, kangaroos and other wildlife reliant on the area's sensitive ecosystems.

2. Fire and emergency management issues

The consequences of a fire at the proposed facility could be catastrophic, both in terms of spread and toxicity, given the plans to store up to 20,000 tonnes of plastic waste at the site. This has been well described in the presentations to the IPC given by Greg Hickling and Kylie Roberts Frost. In particular, specialist emergency services resources of the nature required for a fire at a facility of this scale are located over one hour away in Wollongong and Campbelltown, and the local retained fire stations are not adequately resourced to respond to a large, hazardous, industrial fire should this occur. The nearest permanently staffed stations are at Narellan (46 minutes away) and Albion Park (at least 49 minutes away).

The proponent, in Technical Report 5 - Fire and Incident Management Review, claims that the proposed facility is not on bush fire prone land, however this contradicts the NSW Rural Fire Service's mapping tool, which indicates that part of the lot is. A recent NSW Parliamentary inquiry by Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment identified that climate change adaptation measures are not adequately integrated into our state's planning processes. Given the escalating intensity and frequency of disasters including bushfire due to climate change, the real fire risk at this location may be even higher than indicated by current documentation.

3. Land use conflict

The location of General Industrial and Environmental Living zones adjacent to one another is extraordinarily unusual. Further, the proposal contradicts the Wingecarribee Shire Council's Southern Highlands Innovation Park Master Plan.

As stated by Architecture Republic, a sustainability-focused design practice based in the Southern Highlands:

The intent of the Development Control Plan (DCP) for the proposed site is to 'facilitate a transition between residential uses and heavier industrial uses across the northern parts of the Enterprise Corridor' (Clause 2.2). While the development is technically exempt from compliance with the EC DCP as a State Significant Development, Section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (the Act) requires the Commission to take into consideration any relevant Development Control Plan. Even where specific controls from the EC DCP may not be applicable, the aims of the EC DCP to 'provide a clear framework for development in the Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor' and 'to protect the amenity of surrounding rural and residential areas' should be taken into account. A proposal of this scale and character clearly fails to meet these aims.

The proposed site is less than 200 metres from residential homes and the Australian Bioresources facility, 750m from an early childhood learning centre, and only 10 metres from riparian waterways that feed directly into Sydney's drinking water catchment. It is co-located next to agricultural zones and within habitat corridors for multiple local wildlife species.

The proponent has identified the potential for emissions of particulate matter and volatile organic compounds from the facility. Advice raised in public meetings that the proponent suggests residents stay indoors to minimise the impacts of air emissions from the operation of the facility has rightly raised alarm for nearby residents. Though the applicant defends that this advice was taken out of context, and that the proposed facility is not expected to independently cause daily exceedances of safe particulate levels, it acknowledged the potential for exceedances on days when background pollution levels were already high.

On 30 October 2024, newly Elected Members of Wingecarribee Shire Council reiterated a 2023 resolution to formally oppose this proposal in its current location and form citing "long-term land use conflict issues".

Conclusion

In addition to the issues that the Greens have raised in this submission relating to environmental and human health risks, fire and emergency management risks and land use conflict, we note the substantial opposition to this proposal from residents, from the local council and from traditional owners. We note also that a number of objectors have offered their support to the proponent and to the government in identifying a more suitable site for this or any other proposals for recycling facilities. Southern Highlands communities, and the Greens, support the development of the infrastructure needed to urgently transition NSW toward a circular economy, and look forward to working collaboratively with the government to do so.

We recommend that proposal SSD-9409987 is rejected.