



**New South Wales Government**  
Independent Planning Commission

## **TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING**

MOSS VALE PLASTICS RECYCLING FACILITY (SSD-9409987)

### **PUBLIC MEETING – DAY 2**

PANEL:

ANDREW MILLS (CHAIR)  
CLARE SYKES  
JANETT MILLIGAN

SPEAKERS:

KATE INGHAM  
TABITHA MCINTOSH  
GAYE WHITE  
MICHELLE WATERS  
PIP REID  
KATIE LOCKE  
CAROL MCGREGOR  
MAREE MITCHELL  
IAN BURNS  
CARMEL DONNAN  
SARAH UTHER  
INGRID SKIRKA  
FELICITY CADWALLADER  
WAYNE PRATT  
PAULA ZAJA  
DR HELEN MALOOF  
NATANIEL (NATE) KRAIZELBURD  
JENNIFER SLATTERY  
SHARDAE EWART  
ED RUDLOFF

ANNEMAREE DALZIEL  
SUSAN CHIN  
JANE ETCHELLS  
DR JACQUELINE DUC  
RODGER GOWARD  
CHRISTINE HANNAN  
ROSALYN MILLAR  
FIONA MITCHELL  
DANUTA HULAJKO  
STIRLING SCHUNEMANN  
GRANT FIGTREE  
BEN OLOFSEN  
LYNETTE SAVILLE  
ALEX SICARI

LOCATION: BOWRAL MEMORIAL HALL,  
16-24 BENDOOLEY STREET, BOWRAL

DATE: 10:00AM – 3:06PM  
FRIDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **MR ANDREW MILLS:** ... Plastics Recycling Facility. I am speaking to you today from Gundungarra land and I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to the Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

10 I am Andrew Mills, and I am the Chair of this panel. And joining me are my fellow commissioners, Clare Sykes and Janett Milligan. Panel members have made conflict of interest disclosures and as Chair of the Commission, I have determined that the panel can consider this application. A copy of that decision document is available on our website.

15 We have a limited and specific role at the end of planning process. We decide if an application should go ahead, and if so, on what conditions. We consider the Department's Assessment Report, the application, your written and oral submissions, and other materials that the planning law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be made available on our website.

20 In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We're also obliged to consider public submissions and that is the purpose of today. We want to hear what you think about the merits of the application. This is not a forum for submissions on whether or not you like or approve the applicant or of the laws that we must obey or the policies we must consider.

25 The application has already been assessed by the Department on our behalf. Many of you have already participated in the Department's processes and I thank you for that participation.

30 There is no need to repeat your previous submissions. They are all available to us for our consideration. The applicant and the Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application and assessment and the conditions we're considering. Today, we want to hear your response to the Department's assessment recommendations and the recommended conditions.

35 Even if your submission objects to the application being approved at all, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed, either wholly or in part, by the imposition of conditions. Your consideration of alternatives does not in any way compromise your submission, and it enables the panel to consider all options.

40 Today we will hear from registered speakers. At the conclusion of Day 3 of the public meeting, we will hear from the Department and the applicant to answer any questions or respond to any issues raised during the public meeting.

45 While we will endeavour to stick to our published schedule, this will be dependent

on registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. I will introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the panel. Everyone has been advised in advance how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired.

To ensure everyone receives their fair share of time, I will enforce time keeping rules, but extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by me. However, in the interest of fairness to other registered speakers, an extension may also not be granted.

If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation, it would be appreciated if you could provide a copy to the Commission. Please note any information given to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs its approach to managing your information and is available on the Commission's website.

Exits from this venue in the case of emergency are located on the right-hand side (your left) and the toilets are located outside the foyer area.

So, thank you and we will get underway with our first speaker of the day, Kate Ingham.

**MS KATE INGHAM:** Thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to speak. My name is Kate Ingham. I've consulted with businesses and council in the region and have served on the Local Business Chamber.

I also stand before you as a breast cancer survivor. My type was hormone driven. And there is increasing evidence that plastics interfere with the endocrine system. While I won't focus on health, I question the insights provided to the Health Department regarding this development.

History shows us that change occurs only when community takes ownership. Consider thalidomide, asbestosis, and tobacco. We cannot wait for a cancer cluster in Moss Vale to formally acknowledge the impacts of microplastics.

Plasrefine, as I understand it, should fall under the Heavy Industrial Storage Establishment category. Plastics contain 13,000 chemicals, with 3,200 considered toxic, that can be volatile and often mix with lithium batteries, creating hazardous mixes. The Act defines a potentially hazardous industry as one posing significant risk to human health and the environment, a waste or storage facility should be treated as an innominate use and assessed against the Heavy Industrial Storage criteria. However, such establishments are prohibited on an E4 Zone. The SHIP is zoned E4. Catch 22.

How did we get here? The State Government paid \$270,000 to develop a master plan for the SHIP, which is zoned Light Industrial, and supported strongly by the community. This Plasrefine development slipped through during council

administration with limited community representation, and Plasrefine community consultant largely occurring during COVID. The development was scaled so it bypassed local decision making to become a State Significant Development.

5 Understandably, the community is extremely sceptical. This proposal has been facilitated by a civil engineering firm with previous ties to the council and state agencies to navigate it through the system. As for the SHIP, for 10 years I've worked to foster an innovation culture in this area. We have natural amenities, great schools and a capacity to fund our own.

10 The SHIP will create high-value jobs, balancing our seasonal tourism industry. Recently, an entrepreneur has acquired 500 hectares and is currently consulting with stakeholders to make the SHIP a reality. This is the development we need – low impact, high value. But tech is fickle. Lifestyle and amenity are essential to such developments. Placing a heavy industrial facility in the middle of this development threatens these plans. There's always the option of Byron or Noosa.

15 The jobs Plasrefine promises are unlikely to go to locals. While the SHIP will create high-value opportunities, employment pathways for our kids. It will also incorporate affordable housing, now jeopardised by this proposal. The Plasrefine project relies on subsidies because its business case doesn't stack up. It's been modelled with a number of trucks, the 40% attrition, the sale price, and the material created. It doesn't stack without local, state and federal subsidy. And what will happen in the event of a fire? The company will likely exit, leaving the council and state to deal with the cleanup.

20 The State Government is under pressure to handle plastic recycling. I get it. Why not define the project clearly, identify experts, and create public-private partnerships to do it right? The State Government's Department of Infrastructure would not allow this project through its first gate. And we're here fighting on planning, not viability.

25 Our local, state and federal representatives agree this is not the right site. They've attempted to work with the owners to find alternatives but have been stonewalled. There is zero community licence for this plastic waste and storage facility. This is just the beginning. Direct action, class actions, legislative action, political action, and media action will work to make sure this disaster stops here.

30 This heavy industrial development should not proceed. Thank you.

35 **MS TABITHA MCINTOSH:** Thank you for having me speak on behalf of my community, and it's brilliant to see such a big turnout at the IPC hearing this week. Thank you.

40 I want to voice my concern today about the diabolical ecosystem and health outcomes on the cards with the progression of Plasrefine in the Highlands. I absolutely reject the concept that the Highlands is an appropriate site. The Highlands being a family friendly community with a heavy density of schools.

The proposed site's proximity to residential areas, playing fields, farmlands and schools is absolutely catastrophic from a health perspective.

5 A facility like Plasrefine will discharge up to 10,000 litres of wastewater each day into the Wingecarribee and Sydney drinking water catchment. It has the intention to process up to 120,000 tonnes of mixed plastic waste each year, with the potential for up to 6% of this plastic being released as microplastics in a post-filtration discharge into our waterways. Now, I had to pull out my calculator for this, but actually this equates to over 7 million kilograms of microplastics each year being released into our immediate waterways. And with no way of  
10 remediating this effectively, and this poses an inexcusable environmental threat to the ecosystems and to the health of our community.

15 Thank you. The elephant in the room here is that microplastics and nano-plastics contain endocrine disrupting chemicals which I'll call EDCs because I'm really afraid of that noisy bell. Recycling processes involve synthetic additives being added to the plastics in storage to tell them into pellets and flakes. And this will release the plastics compounds and plasticisers like phthalates and bisphenol A into our waterways, our food chain, and our drinking water. Not to mention the  
20 volatile organic carbons that will be released into the air, reducing our air quality.

Talking about class action, I foresee a silent pandemic of asthma attacks in our schools as a result. But this is where I can bring my expertise to the table. Because over my 20-year career, not just as a mother but as a clinician, a private naturopath in private clinical practice, I've been interested in the intersection of human health and environmental health, and this has taken various expressions over my career.  
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With my Medical Science Degree, my major was in Reproductive Physiology. I then went on to study post-graduate Environmental Medicine and most recently, a Masters in Reproductive Medicine through the School of Medicine at New South Wales University. I also published this book eight years ago, One Bite at a Time, empowering the public on how to reduce their exposures to endocrine-disrupting chemicals. And the reason I did this is because our protective policies in Australia are lagging compared to international policies.  
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When we look to international standards such as the REACH frameworks that's used in the UK and the EU, their policies that govern regulation, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals, are founded in a precautionary approach. And it makes logical sense, doesn't it? Better to be safe than sorry. But unfortunately in Australia, we assume safety until proven unsafe.  
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Now, the modern world already presents so many challenges to health, you know, climate change, pandemics, stress, financial strain, you know, all of these ultra-processed edible food-like substances that are all over our shelves. But we in the Highlands will have to add to that list an industrial level of exposure to EDCs.  
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Human studies show a high probability of EDCs contributing to diabetes, obesity, autoimmune disorders, ADHD in our children and adults, thyroid disorders,

recurrent miscarriage, plummeting sperm counts, as well as many cancers.

5 But despite the growing and, in some places, very established base of literature connecting EDCs to these adverse health outcomes, public perception and knowledge concerning exposures to EDCs remains very low. We have publications like The Guardian telling us that there are microplastics found in testicles. Publications like the New York Times telling us that there are microplastics found in every breastmilk sample tested.

10 Unfortunately, for many doctors today, this remains a clinical blind-spot. Because EDCs are invisible. And there's a huge gap between what the current body of literature says and daily clinical practice.

15 So I want to take just a minute to teach you about BPA and phthalates, EDCs that will be released into our environment, that we'll have repeated and constant exposures to, should this plastics refinery factory proceed. They are defined as exogenous chemicals or mixtures of chemicals that interfere with the endogenous hormones; they often mimic hormones; BPA mimics oestrogen and blocks androgens; and they interfere with normal functioning. "From the womb to the tomb," the literature talks about.

20 So, human exposure to these EDCs is via ingestion, inhalation and also through the skin. Everybody is affected. They are very potent, these chemicals, at very low doses. So, tiny exposures can have huge health effects. They do not follow normal toxicology models, so they're very difficult to study. They're also difficult to study because quite often the effects of these chemicals don't present until later in life. Their affects can be latent.

25 Timing of exposure is very important. And the most striking impacts I found on developing infants, children, also teenagers and then also female and reproductive outcomes. The literature is definitive, that even minute exposures at vulnerable windows of developments can cause irreversible structural and functional deficits. Things like hypospadias and undescended testes in our baby boys. Also, this skyrocketing male factor in fertility.

30 There are quality review articles in very high-end journals, publications by the World Health Organization and FIGO, highlighting that we underestimate the impact of these EDCs on reproductive systems and on human development. Having a plastics recycling facility in the Highlands poses an enormous environmental threat to all of us. This is a modifiable risk factor for all of the diseases I mentioned. There is zero doubt in my mind that a facility like this in Moss Vale will bring catastrophic health effects to our community that cannot be reversed. Irreparable damage, and our biggest casualties will be our children and our people of reproductive age.

35 We must take a precautionary approach. We must prevent Plasrefine from establishing itself here in our backyard.

**MR MILLS:** If I can – sorry –

**MS MCINTOSH:** The need for action at all levels –

5 **MR MILLS:** If I can just ask you to – you’ve gone over time, if you could close up, thank you.

**MS MCINTOSH:** No problem. We must protect our children. Our current and future generations are really our biggest asset. Thank you.

10 **MR MILLS:** Our next speaker is Gaye White.

**MS GAYE WHITE:** Good morning, and thanks for coming back for Day 2. My name is Gaye White, I’m a director of a community group called Win Zero – Wingecarribee Net Zero Emissions, and an active Landcare committee member.

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20 Twice a year I participate in the platypus audit done just downstream from this plant. And I’m currently working to restore the riparian zone along this stretch of the Wingecarribee River with the Landcare group. Over the years, I’ve also collaborated closely with our council on the master planning of the Southern Highlands Innovation Park – the SHIP – as well as any other key documents, like the Regional Plan, Strategic Plan, the Local Environment Plan.

25 Together, our community and council have crafted a vision that balances innovation, community and conservation. Today I urge you to keep the vision intact by rejecting the Plasrefine proposal that fundamentally opposes the SHIP’s purpose.

30 Next slide. I want you to have a look at the contrast between the vision and the reality. The setbacks for the SHIP are recommended at 40 metres. Plasrefine’s setback will 7 metres. The green space in the SHIP includes substantial areas with even 40 metres of landscape space between buildings. How many buildings are on this site? Plasrefine, however, has minimal onsite landscaping, that barely avoids the two creeks – one on the east and one on the west – and they’re even claiming landscaping across the road as part of their landscaping.

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40 The height of the SHIP – the height in the SHIP, I should say – is one to two storeys. Where Plasrefine will tower to 1.5 with the stacks. Building footprint in the SHIP is capped at 30 to 40% of the land area. But Plasrefine covers over 78% of the site. This stark contrast underscores the Plasrefine’s proposal fundamentally opposes the SHIP’s vision for a sustainable green innovation park.

45 If approved, this decision would be like when the caterpillar sneezed – a small action with far-reaching consequences. Plasrefine’s presence will ripple through the SHIP, disrupting its balance of green space, research, community, with impacts extending well beyond the single site.

Next slide. This is the constraints map for the SHIP master plan. All those blue bits, that’s the “do not go”. It shows the Plasrefine site, it’s in the flood-prone zone



near two creeks that flow into the Wingecarribee River, a crucial part of Sydney's catchment. Large risks mean pollutants would threaten both our ecosystem and Sydney's water supply. Directly opposing the SHIP's goal of actually highlighting and protecting these creeks.

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Next slide. The SHIP's vision and master plan clusters compatible industries to foster synergy in research and development, education and advanced manufacturing. The proposed Plasrefine site lies within the research and advanced manufacturing precinct, and don't laugh, but the biotech precinct. Areas intended for medical devices, research facilities, like the Australian Bioresearch (ABR Centre) affectionately known as the Mouse House.

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Plasrefine's location just 30 minutes from ABR, Australia's leading bioresearch centre, 220 metres from residential areas, directly opposes the SHIP's purpose. Imagine a cutting edge research laboratory besides heavy industry or family homes bordered by industrial-scale plastic processing. The SHIP's master plan intentionally excluded heavy industry from these zones to prevent this conflict.

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Next slide. Plasrefine is far better suited in a New South Wales special activation precinct, designed to host these large industrial facilities with appropriate infrastructure, clustering and streamlined approval. Quite frankly, it's mystifying that after council and volunteers have invested so much time, effort and \$270,000 in state funding into the SHIP's master plan, that the State Government would now disregard this work and recommend Plasrefine for approval.

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I urge the Commission to uphold the SHIP's purpose, protect the environment, and keep Sydney drinking water safe. Our federal, state and local government representatives all oppose Plasrefine in this location. It is not the right site.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Michelle Waters.

**MS MICHELLE WATERS:** Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Michelle Waters. I live in the Southern Highlands. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

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So, I had prepared a nice 4.9 minute speech. And I listened to the speakers on Monday, and I've decided to do this [tears up paper]. Don't worry, I'll recycle it.

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I am going to do something a little bit different with the four-and-a-half minutes I have left. I am going to give the Plasrefine proposal a score. And so in preparation I have prepared a scorecard. And that way, you can play along too.

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So, in my 30-plus years career as managing very large projects, obviously you set evaluation criteria for what you want to achieve in any proposal. And so it's important to know that you meet that scorecard in order to know whether or not you should proceed.

So, let's think about the site. Let's go through our scorecard. If you were going to

choose a site, what do you think you might look at? Do you think you might look at zoning? Ooh, gosh, that's a good idea. Would you look at the land size? Do you think you should consider environmental sensitivities, ecosystems and protected areas? You'd think you'd stay away from residential areas and have a bit of separation. Do you think you'd build a plastics recycling factory near major infrastructure, so that you might be near a port or some major rail infrastructure? Do you think you might need a water supply?

And what about managing PFAS – I thought that other lady was terrific, by the way – and microplastics in our wastewater? You'd think you'd need adequate power, run 24/7. You think you should build on a flood plain? Do you think you should have stable land? Do you think you should consider the impacts on air quality? Do you think you might think about the noise that you might make from a factory running 24/7 and the impacts of these roller doors going up and down the whole time?

And what about the visual impacts of a factory? Do you think you should consider that? You think you might consider the proximity to your waste plastic sources. And what about being close to your end markets? Maybe access to some workforce, build workforce? And do you think it's important to think about what the community thinks about this?

Do you think you might get government support? And do you think you would want to be co-located with complementary industries? Well, I say you should consider this scorecard, and you shouldn't just consider the price of the cheap piece of land in deciding where to put Plasrefine.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Is Pip Reid available?

**MS PIP REID:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Pip Reid. I am a registered clinical nutritionist, a local Bowral resident, and a mother. But I very nearly wasn't.

I suffer from a debilitating condition called endometriosis which causes scar tissue to develop outside the uterus, often resulting in excruciating pain, that leaves many of us bedridden for days. For years, my own endometriosis made it impossible to conceive, and it took dedicated nutrition care, specialised medical guidance and, ultimately, surgery before I was finally able to fall pregnant.

It's experiences like mine that drive my passion to help others struggling with hormone imbalances. In my clinic, I work daily with women battling endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, adenomyosis, thyroid disorders, insulin resistance, diabetes, infertility, and even onset puberty and menopause.

I see firsthand the deep impact these conditions have on my clients. The toll on their mental health, their bodies, their relationships, their work, and for my younger clients, even their schooling and dreams of future families.

5 Today, as we discuss the proposed Plasrefine Recycling Factory in a residential area, I stand here for health of our community and especially for those who, like myself and my clients, have battled these difficult, often misunderstood health issues. The factory's proposed release of microplastics would increase the risk of hormone-disrupting pollutants in our environment, a threat that is all too real for anyone facing these kinds of health challenges.

10 The wellbeing of our community, our families and especially our children, is on the line here. The factory's proposed operations would release microplastics and potentially harmful chemicals into the air we breathe and the water we drink. Today, I want to speak specifically about how these microplastics can affect our health, particularly through their effects on the endocrine system which regulates nearly every function in our bodies, from metabolism to fertility.

15 Quickly let's talk about the microplastics. We know what they are by now, but while they may be small, their impact is anything but. Once microplastics enter our environment, they don't just disappear. Instead, they permeate our ecosystem, seeping into the soil, rivers and oceans, becoming an uninvited guest in our air, water and even our food.

20 The most alarming aspect of microplastics is their effect on our endocrine system, the system responsible for hormone production and regulation. Microplastics act as an endocrine-disrupting chemical (EDCs), mimicking blocking or altering our natural hormones. This disruption can wreak havoc on our bodies, especially our reproductive health. Hormone balance is crucial for everyone, yet we're seeing that microplastics throw this delicate system into disarray.

25 Studies show that the presence of microplastics and their associated chemicals to lead to early puberty in children, increase the risk of hormone-driven conditions like endometriosis and adenomyosis, contribute to infertility in both men and women, cause early onset menopause, and are even linked to cancers. These are not small issues, they're life changing, impacting our physical, mental and emotional health.

30 As someone who specialises in women's health, I'm alarmed by the toll that microplastics take on women's hormones. Conditions like endometriosis and adenomyosis are becoming increasingly common, affecting 1 in 7 women worldwide. There is mounting evidence that exposure to microplastics and other EDCs would be a contributing factor. Women with endometriosis suffer from debilitating pain, heavy bleeding, and fertility challenges. Yet this is often a misunderstood and under-funded area of health.

35 Microplastics in our environment are linked to elevated risk of developing endometriosis and other inflammatory conditions in the reproductive system. And what's more, they could be making these conditions more severe and harder to treat. When we consider the impacts on a developing foetus, the picture becomes even graver. The chemicals in microplastics have been shown to cross the placenta, exposing unborn babies to these harmful compounds before they even

take their first breath.

We should also be deeply concerned about how microplastics are affecting fertility and child development. Recent from Andrew Huberman, a neuroscientist and a  
5 tenured Associate Professor in the Departments of Neuro and Biology in the Stanford University School of Medicine shows that exposure to microplastics and EDCs have been linked to reduced sperm counts in men, lower egg quality in women, and developmental problems in children.

10 This is not just abstract statistics. It's about real life impacts on our family and our future generations. Imagine our future where our children face increasing infertility rates. Where they reach puberty too early, and where they suffer from chronic health issues that result in debilitating pain, periods and flooding periods. Where they can't leave the house due to pollutants like microplastics in our  
15 environment.

20 Studies now indicate that microplastic exposure is causing changes in young boys' testosterone levels, leading to lower sperm counts later in life. For young girls, exposure can lead to early onset puberty and obviously putting them at implications later in life.

25 Now let's get back to why we're here today. Allowing Plasrefine to build their factory here is not just a matter of inconvenience. It's a potential public health crisis. If this factory is built, it will dramatically increase the level of microplastics in our air and water. Who here has heard the recommendation for residents who live nearby, "on a windy day, to stay inside their house"? This is not a health plan. Once these microplastics enter our bodies, they stay there, accumulating over time and potentially causing these very health issues we've discussed. Plus there are links to cancers, with microplastics recently being found lodged in the brain of  
30 tumour sufferers.

35 Is this a risk we're willing to take? Are we willing to gamble with the health of our children and future generations just for the convenience of a nearby recycling plant? And who is it convenient for? Certainly not the residents of the Southern Highlands. No one benefits from this factory, apart from the company. It's not a risk my friends are willing to take; they're already talking about moving, pulling their kids from school, selling them homes before Plasrefine slashes their property value.

40 I urge the decision makers here today to look closely at the science and consider the serious health implications of our community. Our town deserves to be a safe place free from contaminants that will irreparably harm our health. We have options. There are sustainable and less invasive locations to recycle without jeopardising our community's wellbeing. We need to stand together and demand  
45 accountability from those in power, making it clear that our health and the health of our future generations will not be compromised for short-term gains.

There are other locations, better technologies that can fulfil the goals of recycling

without polluting our neighbourhoods. Or even better, put the money towards reducing the use of plastic in the first place.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Katie Lockie, please.

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**MS KATIE LOCKE:** Good morning, IPC Panel, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Katie Locke and I live in Moss Vale. The proposed development SSD – sorry, I have – 9409987 at 74 to 76 Beaconsfield Road is so wrong on so many levels. So wrong that I rewrote my speech in five minutes this morning. This is it. It's

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changed.  
I'm a woman in my fifties. I went to school in this district. I have family living in Mittagong, Burradoo, Bowral, Moss Vale, Exeter, and Berrima. I've lived in Mittagong, Burrawang, Exeter and now Moss Vale, all in the last 44 years.

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I cannot believe that with the power of the computer technology and our access to education, that anyone from the powers of the New South Wales State Government should even allow an oversized development such as this to be placed in a site such as the end of Beaconsfield Road.

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As you all – sorry, I'll start again. Are you all nuts? And especially from the GDH and Plasrefine, are you that selfish, deplorable and greedy that you would build something such as this proposal describes, that would cause so much irreparable environment, health and, let's acknowledge it, economic harm to these people and their homes, and wake up the next day, month and year after year to say to yourself, "Well done, I've done my bit, I've done my best, I'm a human and I care." Well, ladies and gentlemen, I don't think so.

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This is not the right site.

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We all have our little things in our lives that mean a lot to each of us. Well, my little thing I have in my life is a parrot named Ernie. He is what got me through a touch time when a dear friend died in August 2020. It is because I lost my friend, I bought Ernie. Now, having a bird has educated me on the wrong poison toxins in his air, water and food. I have to be so careful not to kill Ernie. I have no non-stick PFAS laden cookware in my home. I'm careful not to light cheap candles. When you heat these non-stick cookware toxins, sorry, non-stick cookware, the toxins are released in the air and – sorry, toxins, plastics and chemicals kill birds like Ernie in a matter of hours.

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This is just one kitchen. OK, so let's do this on a large processing factory scale, with smoke stacks. Let's share all these cooked chemicals with everyone nearby. It's the canary in the coal mine, folks. Our native birds, insects, bees are the canaries.

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And give me a break, GHD. You cannot ensure that you will not let runoff into our waterways that lead through to the Sydney water catchment. And everybody online watching this, this is your water too. You cannot ensure you will not release

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PFAS and micro particulate matter onto us, our environment and our children. Stop taking money from the petrochemical company's purse. Before you destroy our local area, get your science facts straight. Pick up your bags and move on to another location. Because ladies and gentlemen, Beaconsfield Road is by hell not the right site.

**MR ANDREW MILLS.** Thank you. Carol McGregor.

**MS CAROL MCGREGOR:** Hi, my name is Carol McGregor. I'm a little old lady, as you can see, probably referred to by Ms Zheng as "one of the elderly who is terrified by the scaremongering that's been going around through Moss Vale Matters". I hate to tell you, yes, I am scared, but I am scared by the research and investigation I have done by myself. And I'm terrified, because I suffer from a chronic lung condition, and the establishment of this factory is almost like putting another nail in my coffin.

I know other speakers have talked about what happens with plastic recycling, and definitely the scientific studies show that localised air pollution and the release of toxins occur during plastic shredding and pose a risk to human health. I'm sure the developer is aware of this. I mean, they tantalise us with little hints about it with, "We'll make sure the doors to the fillet facility are kept shut when not in use." It sort of reminds me of my mother on a hot summer day, yelling at me, "Don't slam the screen door." I think just keeping the door shut is not enough to keep this polluting toxic matter away from us all.

I found it also difficult to find information on the emission stacks. In fact, I looked at the most recent sketches and I can't find the emission stacks. And I'm like, "Are they saying I'm sure they're high enough, reach high enough into the sky so it won't happen, to affect the people that are on the ground." But for some reason, the theory of gravity comes to mind; what goes up must come down.

My other really big concern is the fact that the New South Wales Department of Health has decided not to make a comment on this development. And I think that is really remiss of their duty of care to our community. Certainly on the Department of Health's own website, and if you look at other websites like the Lung and Cancer Foundation of Australia or UK, you'll find it's definitely clear in the advice on their website of the harm that can result from the toxic matter that this facility will produce.

Numerous studies have shown the association between particles and increased hospital admissions. Think how will our existing hospitals manage to cope with that when really they're at full ball now? So, as well as death from heart and lung disease. The studies also identified people who are most at risk, or in other words, are sensitive recipients. I love that term. Love that term. And I'm actually one of those sensitive recipients.

So, let me explain why. Other speakers have talked about pregnant women, where these pollutants, toxic pollutants are linked to adverse pregnancy outcomes with

low birthweight and premature delivery. Terrifying. The second lot of sensitive recipients are children. Where it has an adverse effect on developing lungs, immune and metabolic systems, and will particularly have a negative impact on vulnerable children such as those with asthma or cystic fibrosis.

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In my past life I was a nursing sister, and I can tell you if you've ever sat beside a child who's having a severe asthma attack sufficient for them to be admitted to hospital. It is horrifying. It is tear-producing. And I feel sorry for any adults who may have children with this condition, that are now fighting against this proposed development and know what the outcome will be.

10

In my case, I am what is called an "older adult". I'm immune suppressed and I suffer from a chronic long condition, and a flare up will see me back in hospital being pumped full of drugs, being on a respirator. And even the trip in an ambulance with lights flashing I can tell you is no fun, and I wouldn't wish it on anyone.

15

So this proposed development will see me with an exacerbation of my current condition. It'll reduce my life expectancy and increase the rate of progression of my lung condition. So, I live a whole 10 kilometres away. Hey, why should it affect me? I'm far enough away. That's not the case. Anyone who's been here through the bushfires in 2019, 2020 knows the smoke, the particulate matter, the ashes, the cinders that came all the way from Bundanoon and landed in our backyard in [unintelligible 01:09:05].

20

25

I have two choices. One, to stay inside with the air conditioning and the air purifier incarcerating myself as if I'm the criminal that caused this. Or move out of the air, a place that I moved to 15 years ago and I absolutely love.

30

I request that the Independent Planning Commission and the State Government acknowledge the negative impact on air pollution that will happen if this facility is allowed to proceed. And I trust that you will act in the best interests of our community and the environment. I am not just fighting for my right to breathe clean air, but for the entire community of the Southern Highlands.

35

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Maree Mitchell.

**MS MAREE MITCHELL:** I would like to thank the IPC for the opportunity to speak. Terrifying. OK. By nature I like to dive before I weigh in on an issue. I am by nature, measured. After considered research I can unequivocally stand in front of you today and say this is not the right site. Recycling plastic is not even the right solution, but that is a battle for another day.

40

I am tired. I've been trawling documents until 1 a.m. every night. Trying to make sense of why this could possibly be deemed the right site. I am not a lawyer, I am not a town planner, and I am not a scientist. What I am is a working mum who lives 2 kilometres from this site. I am determined to be heard and for my children to be heard. My children asked this morning that I also speak up for our dog,

45

Nellie. I could only imagine how tired those who have been fighting this for almost four years, and what toll this has played on their mental health. I thank them.

5 Again, I am not a scientist, but like most people speaking here, I have researched the risk to our fragile environment and our health. The devastating effect of what happens when things go wrong, or even when they don't. GHD is saying there will be no threat to our environment or health. I am not qualified, nor do I believe I have at any point been provided with enough information to comment on this.

10 I am grateful for the extension of a week granted for further investigation by experts on this matter, and I thank Pip Freckleton and Annie Cannon-Brookes for the weight their involvement can add.

15 Plasrefine are presenting as bewildered at the anger from community. To be clear, I am not angry at Plasrefine. They are just down here to make a buck, let's face it. I am angry at the State Government for letting us down.

20 I am angry at the State Government for not listening. Not listening to our elected council. For not listening to our elected member for Goulburn. For not listening to our community. They have questioned why the opinion of someone who lives 10 kilometres matters. This is what community engagement looks like. This affects the whole of the Southern Highlands. We're a strong united community. We stand beside each other. We have stood beside each other in bushfires, in  
25 drought, and we will stand beside each other in this.

By definition, this is a state-wide issue, not a local issue. I am angry at the inept zoning that could allow this site to be deemed fit for purpose. But let's be clear, permissible use does not imply consent. Just because you can does not mean you should. New South Wales State Government – do better. We are not a box to tick  
30 off your 2030 recycling targets.

GHD has rejected the recommendation of a human health impact assessment or HIA, based on the premise that there is a low risk that the proposal will be  
35 associated with air quality and health related impacts. An HIA as developed by the World Health Organization defines human health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

40 The mental health toll this project has taken and continues to take on this community is real. In the social impact assessment prepared by Ethos Urban, it is stated that, "Mental health is the most prevalent long-term health condition of residents of Moss Vale. A human health impact study is warranted."

45 For me, the most shocking disregard for mental health and community was the initial engagement on Christmas Eve no less, 2020. The letterbox drop to a handful of sensitive receptors including a young family, [redacted].

These are not statistics on a page. These are real page. And this community spent



5 the previous Christmas shrouded in smoke from the worst bushfire this community has ever seen. Endless studies show that trauma and stress do not dissipate but compound. These people went from drought to bushfires to COVID with Plasrefine as a proverbial cherry on top. There has been no consideration for the mental health of this community.

10 The staff of the Garvan Institute next door are also real people. The staff at ABR are concerned with the impacts on their health, impacts on long-term job prospects, and the impacts on the mice and researchers. There is a heavy strain on the mental health of these employees before we even delve into the risks on their physical health and wellbeing. I guess because they spend, I quote, “most of their time indoors,” they’ll be OK.

15 We must not mistake the Garvan Institute’s apparent neutrality in this case to consent. The Garvan Institute is so heavily reliant on State Government funding, in the current economic research climate, they cannot afford to jeopardise their funding. To be clear, the Garvan Institute have never supported this project.

20 We have listened to so many reasons why this is not the right site. The social, economic, environmental, aesthetic and health related issues. I don’t have time to list them all. My question would be this: why is this site proposed as the right site? There was enough land. It was affordable. It was appropriately zoned. That is not enough. The only real benefit to community presented is employment.

25 As per the data presented in March 2023, the unemployment rate in the Wingecarribee Shire was 0.7%. Compared to the New South Wales average of 3.3%, or even the rural New South Wales average of 3.2%. This suggests a significantly low proportion of unemployment. I question whether potentially there are other rural areas more in need of employment.

30 This is not the right site. At what point is there so much mitigation required to get a proposal over the line that we have to question whether it is the right proposal or the right site? At what point do we question if this land is correctly zoned, or if this type of facility is correctly categorised?

35 We’ve been accused of NIMBY-ism and you know what? They are right. I do not want this in my backyard. I do not want this in Jean’s backyard, Vanessa’s backyard, or Chris’s backyard. I do not want this in the backyard of the Garvan Institute. There are plenty of sites that are not in anyone’s backyard. Choose one of those. This is not the only site, let’s be clear, there are other sites. This is not the right site.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Ian Burns.

45 **MR IAN BURNS:** Commissioners, thank you for this opportunity. It’s interesting to note, guys, I am the first male speaker today, and there’s one other. So, it would make a difference if we didn’t run the country.

5 OK. Let's get on with it. The Plasrefine proposal fails on a large number of fronts, we're just hearing that time and again. But this morning I'd like to concentrate more on the impact on water. Over the last week, I've sought out and spoken to senior executives from Australia's major plastics recyclers as well as respected middle-sized players. I figure they know more about it than I do, so why not ask them?

10 All are sceptic to the location, the commercial viability, and the stated capacity size of 120,000 tonnes. Why? This is roughly equal to the current output of all the combined plants of the two leading industry players. Firstly, and I couldn't restrain them from making general comments. I wanted to speak about water. They wanted to give me both barrels to start with.

15 The industry is mature. Any proposed additional new plants are generally under 20% of the size of the Plasrefine proposal. Recycling feedstock contracts are all well-established and long term. From collection, sorting and supply to the recycling facilities. So, where is Plasrefine's feedstock coming from? Who are the customers? The local PET market is already mature. If international, how will the business be competitive?

20 And the last point. Where is the unrecyclable plastic waste going? One executive told me it's up to 35% of the feedstock, depending on where it comes from. So, where is that going? All interesting, however, for this meeting, I wanted the information on management of wastewater from plastic washing facilities, because that's hard to find.

25 I was told the type of system required depends on the feedstock. Very dirty, which is agri and industrial films. Dirty, which is most people's yellow bins. And cleaner, which is a deposit collection system. And this all may be influenced by the type of material being washed.

30 Closed wash systems are preferred, and where there is wastewater, the output standard should be very stringent and governed by wastewater agreements using real time, independently monitored. The water processing designed for New South Wales plants have been approved by the DPIE, now a much longer set of initials, DCCEEW, and where I've been unable to find any reference to this in the documents.

35 We know Water New South Wales has issues with PFAS levels in Medlow and Greaves Creek dams in the Blue Mountains. Australia's water quality PFAS standards are multiple of other countries, particularly USA. So, expect our allowable standards to go down over time.

40 To put this in a local context, and that's what we want to talk about today. I'd like to share a recently released scientific report that provides insights to the current health of the Wingecarribee River. This report was brought to my notice by Dr Ian Wright from Western Sydney Uni, and most people would have heard of Ian.

5 The research report is the first on the accumulation of PFOS in platypus in New South Wales. It was published in August. The results compare parts per microgram to kilo of PFOS as analysed from livers of recovered deceased platypus in nine locations across New South Wales. The results are tabled on page 4 of the report.

10 Unfortunately, the platypus from Wingecarribee River at Berrima recorded the third highest liver PFOS concentration, recording some 390 micrograms per kilo, compared to the Thredbo River at Jindabyne at 3, Bellinger River at Bellinger at 4. And unfortunately, a Taronga Zoo platypus passed away, it was less than 1. Shockingly, the highest was the Hunter River at Morpeth at 1,200. And Ourimbah Creek at Ourimbah at 740.

15 Why is this information relevant to this proposal? One, it's extremely naïve to consider that no microplastics will escape the facility in the air, on vehicles, on vehicle tyres, wastewater and stormwater. Negatively charged microplastics are known to contain and attract PFAS chemicals.

20 The site is located adjacent to riparian zones in the Wingecarribee River. The wastewater from plastic washing after processing will enter the local sewerage system. And the stormwater will enter the local stormwater system. And then onto the Wingecarribee River and the greater Sydney drinking water. This research report demonstrates that Wingecarribee River already has a significant PFOS problem.

25 And I urge the commissioners to adopt the precautionary principle. This plant on this site poses significant potential risks to the greater Sydney water supply and I ask the commissioners to recommend against this proposal. This is not the right site.

30 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Carmel Donnan.

35 **MS CARMEL DONNAN:** Good morning, Mr Chairman and commissioners. I'm no expert and I don't even live in Moss Vale. I live in the neighbouring village of Exeter. We moved to the Highlands 10 years ago from Sydney. With ever increasing real estate prices and interest rate hikes, I did what many mothers might do, and I encouraged my adult children to move as well. And they did.

40 I now have a daughter, son-in-law and two babies living in Moss Vale on the doorstep of this experiment, Plasrefine. It seems I wasn't the only one encouraging people to move to the Highlands. The State Government at the time, in their wisdom, legislated to decrease the size of building blocks to make way for more housing, more people, more guinea pigs in this experiment, Plasrefine.

45 I say "experiment" because that's exactly what it is. A plastic re-compositioning plant located in the wrong spot. Too close to people. Too close to delicate ecosystems, as we've heard. Too close to food sources and water catchment. On a scale never seen before in Australia. A social and environmental experiment.

5 Now, I've sat through these proceedings, and I still shake my head. I really don't understand why we're here. One of the reasons, I believe, is because our democracy was stolen from us. We have had no representation in council for years, and consequently, Moss Vale has been exposed and vulnerable.

10 But here we are. In terms of microplastics and fire hazard, the science and associated risks are increasingly alarming and cannot be ignored. I would suggest that we know far more about plastics now than we did four years ago, when this proposal was first made. Which begs the question: Plasrefine claims to have an interest and passion in the environment. Based on what we know about fire and microplastics, how can Plasrefine in good faith justify this location now?

15 I am bewildered. You would think that an environmentally driven company would not be prepared to take the gamble. You see, you can choose to accept the science, or you can choose to reject it. But one thing is certain. In 3, 5 or 10 years' time, when the full impact of microplastics is potentially playing out, you can't say you didn't know, and you can't say you weren't warned.

20 I encouraged my children to move to the area. As a mother, I feel a sense of failure, and I feel a genuine sense of fear for my kids and my grandchildren, the guinea pigs in this experiment. So based on my fear, I have three considerations for the panel. Number one: the definition of recycling in land zoning is completely out of step with the real world. The definition needs to change to ensure that  
25 another community somewhere else isn't having to battle a similar experiment.

Let's actually learn from history and introduce some accountability. If the science is ignored and the experiment goes ahead, Plasrefine should set up a trust fund. Now I don't know how many billions of dollars Plasrefine should put in trust. James Hardie spent well over 4. But if in 10 or 20 years' time, the science is  
30 wrong, the money can be released from trust. But if the science is right, you can't say you didn't know, and you need to compensate accordingly.

35 Finally. Move the location to a suitable site. Last year, June 2023, I attended a public update meeting in Moss Vale. A reasonable question was asked to the Plasrefine representative. Would you consider a different location for your factory? The company representative turned to the elderly lady and said, "We don't move, we don't lose."

40 Now, we run a small business, and one thing is certain in this world. Change. It's inevitable. Australia has a land mass of over 7.7 million kilometres. Are you really telling me that this location, with all the likely risks and concerns, is the best location for this experiment? Or are you simply resisting change?

45 In the iconic Australian movie, The Castle, when Darryl Kerrigan was asked by the judge, "So what rule of law are you using here today to defend your house?" And Darryl Kerrigan replied, "The law of bloody commonsense."

Based on that law, I urge the Commissioner, please no more seeking of information. No more enquiries or consultation. Simply say no to this location and let my daughter and the exhausted people of Moss Vale get on with their lives without fear. Now that would be commonsense. Wrong location. And you can't say you didn't know.

**MR MILLS:** Next speaker, Sarah Uther.

**MS SARAH UTHER:** Commissioners, councillors, and fellow residents. My name is Sarah Uther and I stand here today as one of the many COVID tree changers who have embraced the Southern Highlands. We seized the opportunity provided by working from home to escape the city. We wanted our kids off the screens, out of the shopping malls, and into nature. We chose this region for the idyllic lifestyle and the array of schools promoting outdoor education.

Because here in the Highlands, children get to climb trees, they get to ride their mountain bikes, they tend to animals, they grow vegetables, harvest honey, and gather round campfires to roast marshmallows. This approach is not just enriching; leading educators tell us it's essential for their social, emotional and physical development.

I put to you that there has been a notable demographic change brought on by the recent influx of tree changers, and that this has had an enriched economic and social impact on Moss Vale. Since COVID, our children have filled the classrooms. I know our school has doubled in size in the last five years, and I can pretty much guarantee that the other schools have experienced the same increase.

With increased demand on daycare centres and invigorated local sporting clubs. And just last night it was clear that we brought trick-and-treating to town. We drove the property prices up, and the median age of the region down. We've seen Argyle Street in Moss Vale transform with an array of very fancy new businesses, from cafes, the wine bar, and even a fancy boutique hotel.

This leads to the critical question: is the proponent aware of these changes, or is the Department? Would they consider updating their social impact assessment, data and forecasting to understand the community as it is today? Long-time residents refer to us tree changers as the "Sydney blow-ins" and now I understand their sentiment.

Just two weeks ago, when the development was recommended for approval, our school community was caught off-guard. We were in the dark. Our WhatsApp groups went into overdrive with shock and disbelief. How then is it that so few of us were aware of this proposal when the proponent allegedly undertook extensive community engagement?

How effective was this outreach? I argue that their efforts fell short, because from my two weeks of anecdotal evidence, I suggest that many tree changers and long-time residents remain uninformed and uneasy about the development. Silence

does not indicate acceptance. It reflects a lack of knowledge.

5 This leads me to another critical line of enquiry. How effectively was the administration of the Wingecarribee Council in fulfilling its role in informing and representing our community? With respect to the administrators, were they motivated, and did they have the means to guide us through to this pivotal moment? Did their shortcomings inadvertently favour the proponent? And would we have been better served by our newly elected council?

10 But my deepest concerns transcend mere awareness. It's the potential human health impact on our children due to the site's proximity to our community. To put this into context, our school is 4 kilometres as the wind blows, from the proposed site. Our children play basketball 1.4 kilometres away, tennis 2.6 kilometres away, and numerous sports at the Highlands' largest sporting complex, Eridge Park.  
15 Eridge Park hosts thousands of children across the week, and it sits within a 3.5 kilometre radius in the direction of the prevailing westerly wind.

20 Although New South Wales Health claims that the risk of microplastics on human health is, and I quote, "Not clear but appears to be low," the evidence of neurotoxicity, reproductive toxicity, endocrine disruptions and cardiovascular impacts are emerging at an alarming rate. Just as Pip and Tabitha so beautifully articulated.

25 I contend that before long, the evidence will unveil significant health associations, just as the evidence on tobacco, silica and asbestos did. Whilst the evidence is growing, I urge the Commission to apply the precautionary principle, as the absence of evidence should not be mistaken for the absence of risk.

30 Until we can all confidently agree that no harm will come to our children and our dynamic growing community, we must pursue prevention. I implore you not to allow this proposal to proceed. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Ingrid Skirka.

35 **MS INGRID SKIRKA:** Good morning, everyone. In the Southern Highlands, it's Gundungarra and Wadi Wadi land that owns us. I refer to the site artefacts purloined in locations hundreds of miles away in an act of infantilisation of local Elders. During COVID times, the ACHAR narrative was hatched, writing, "These sites no longer have cultural heritage value as the artefacts have been removed  
40 from the landscape during the test excavations."

45 With permission, I informed the IPC that elder Aunty Trish Levett a year later found evidence missed on country because it is dense with ancient objects. The Aboriginal community calls for artefacts repatriation. Aunty says, "I kept getting the run around as usual, but they need to give them all back. They belong to our ancestors."

Additional proponent third party fiction being, "There are currently no recorded

mythological stories for the study area.” The creation stories of this area centre on Gurrungutch, recorded in media, print, oral histories. Relevant and of value to this community. Taught to local children. I respectfully acknowledge the Elders past, present and emerging.

5

I’m Ingrid Skirka. I learnt to swim in the Wingecarribee River. In Wadi Wadi, it means “Waters to rest beside a flock of birds.” What is in the fountain of youth? Water. Of which we are more than half. Clean water is a strong determinant of our health. Like Jack and Jill, we go up the hill for the purest source.

10

An operations manager for the 16,000 squared-kilometre Sydney catchment,[Brian Symonds said, “There is one region that is arguably more important than any other; the Southern Highlands.”

15

A deluge in the Highlands has the potential to make a huge difference to the amount of water in the storage system which supplies about 1.5 billion litres of drinking water a day to over 5.3 million households and businesses.

20

I refer to the concept of chemical trespass. All those downstream and the water protectors here assert the fundamental right to be free from invasions of their bodies by corporate chemicals via the polluter Plasrefine, that would destroy the source of vital pure Highlands water, which takes about a week to reach city drinkers storage facility.

25

Immediately, the proponent’s outdated heat, beat and treat PFAS contaminants become airborne via industrial fans, vents, smoke stacks, dried sludge, multiple open 50-metre doors. There is no filtration system invented to filter the nanoparticles.

30

Able to pass the blood-brain barrier, this new devil’s dust is fine as 300 um, rides miles with velocity of prevailing winds. Looking at the structure of it, you understand its pervasiveness, like a crown of thorns, Moss Vale, the conduit of contaminants in your Sydney glass of water. Once in your body, which becomes like the Hotel California, they accumulate to cause endocrine disruption and a variety of diseases. PFAS contamination of Minnesota’s drinking water is responsible for clusters of early dead youth.

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Claire Trendwin, National Climate Centre climatologist said, “This eastern side of the catchment near the Illawarra escarpment can get colossal rains, and despite its small size, the area contributes disproportionately to the total inflow into our dams. Planned removal of ancient rivulets to run either side of the 8-acre build water below and water beside. The riparian sites known to locals as ‘the swamp’, four ponds overflowing to the Wingecarribee from Garvan side, flows northerly springs past endangered trees.”

45

The proponent prevaricates an elevated site the river flowing backwards. In reality, the industrial traffic wet feet build site is set for foundation degradation of the 20% void concrete binders, and mobilisation of contaminants to enter the water scape.

5 We are in the sixth extinction due mainly to poor human decisions and maladaptation like Plasrefine. Solutions which backfire. The most comprehensive catalogue of chemicals and plastics the Plaskim project 2024. Over 16,000 chemicals used, two-thirds with no hazard testing, 980 globally regulated, 4,290 known to be hazardous, toxic, bioaccumulate and mobile.

10 It's the little girl, tender aged children in care just metres away, born with a lifetime supply of gametes, egregiously exposed to toxic trespass, who would, if they chose to be mothers, give birth to males with fertility issues. Nancy Zheng and Lyu family Plasrefine are an anti-investment backed by Australian mortgages and taxpayers funding a project too dangerous to drink.

15 Plastic recycling is no more than a storage shopfront for greenwashing corporate and individual greed. Plastic – it's up to our tears, better solutions should be better promoted by a PFAS taskforce, fungus and enzyme eating plastic, plant-based plastic, refill and you reuse. The world's bigger polluter, 200,000 plastic bottles per minute Coca-Cola collect water from our Great Artesian Basin just down the road.

20 We reject the plastic. Take the water. Soft launching in the new future, and this is some new information for the IPC, will be returned to Glass Moss Vale to send a clear message, a refill community initiative proposing to reject Coke sold in plastic bottles. We don't want the toxic waste. It's not the right site.

25 **MR MILLS:** Excuse me. One of our commissioners has a question for you.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Please. I'm not sure I understood entirely the point you were making about the non-return of cultural artefacts.

**MS SKIRKA:** Yes.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Can you clarify that for me?

35 **MS SKIRKA:** Aunty Trish Levett has made several phone calls about that to Biosis and was getting the runaround there.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry. These cultural artefacts from that site?

40 **MS SKIRKA:** Yes, were bagged and taken 498 kilometres away by Biosis. There were several third parties.

**MS MILLIGAN:** OK. Thank you.

45 **MS SKIRKA:** Confabulate the situation.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you.



**MS SKIRKA:** Then they were taken to Queanbeyan. So, Aboriginal community here would like them back. And several other artefacts were found a year later by Aunty Trish on that site. It's rich with vestige.

5 **MS JANETT MILLIGAN:** Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** The next speaker, Felicity Cadwallader.

10 **MS FELICITY CADWALLADER:** Thanks Ingrid, I'm not quite sure how I'm going to follow that one, but I'll do my best. Good morning commissioners and thank you for the opportunity to present today.

15 My name is Felicity Cadwallader and I'm speaking today as a local resident, concerned community member and as a mother. I'm also a lawyer with over 15 years' experience in the energy and resources sector with a focus on renewable energy projects. I have many concerns with this project, but I will let the speakers who have spoken before me on Monday and today, and I agree wholeheartedly with the issues they have raised, with the exception of course, Ms Zheng and her team, and speaker 49, Mr Aldo Giachero.

20 Today I will focus on the suitability of the site chosen for this project by GHD and Plasrefine. In my opinion, based on the project documentation that they have made available, numerous site visits and commonsense, this is just not the right site.

25 I have worked on many major projects, and I understand and support the need for these initiatives. And at times, these projects are located in areas that may not be supported by the community. Mining and resources projects have to be where the resources are. Solar projects have to be where it's sunny. Wind farms have to be where it's windy. And the Snowy Hydro has to be at the top of a mountain.

30 There is no justifiable planning or public interest reason why this plastics recycling facility needs to be located within the heart of the Southern Highlands.

35 Instead, by its own admission, the applicant has chosen Beaconsfield Road simply because it was for sale and, in my opinion, because it was cheap – \$3 million. Well, that's according to internet facts, so anyway. To use a sporting analogy, I love cricket but that doesn't mean I would build Bradman Oval on the side of the jib.

40 I refer to the transcript of meeting between the applicant and panel members which took place on 22nd of October 2024. On page 19, Commissioner Mills, you quite rightly asked the applicant and their advisers why they picked this site, given the applicant is seeking to collect plastic waste from Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong, and whether a site closer to the highway would have made more sense? To which  
45 GHD agreed, and replied, "Yes."

The applicant states that the land was chosen simply because it was the right size and it was available. Clearly based on the project documents, no consideration has

been given as to whether this site by its very nature is appropriate for this facility. This is evidenced by the sheer number of mitigants and conditions of consent that the Department has proposed.

5 The – sorry, excuse me. This is evidenced by – yes. And so it doesn't address the risk associated with operating a facility of this scale and nature on this site. And to make this very clear, these mitigations and conditions of consent do not prevent or eradicate these risks, they minimise them.

10 I do not agree with the DPFI's conclusion in its Development Assessment Report dated October 2024 that the development can be mitigated or managed to an acceptable level of risk, or that the development is in the public interest.

15 I refer to Appendix 2 of the recommended conditions of consent. Implementing traffic management plans (B22, B23) does not and cannot change the fact that 100 heavy vehicle and 140 light vehicle movements are permitted daily. I do not agree with GHD's statement that this proposal has the potential to result in minor increases in traffic.

20 Implementing a noise and vibration management plan (reference NV1, NV2, NV3) does not change the underlying risk that there is literally no buffer zone between the proposed facility and buildings. The impact on the ABR and its value embryonic mice is obvious.

25 Requiring an operations plan for the stock car management needed to manage fire risk (FS3) does not change the underlying risk that up to 20,000 tonnes of highly flammable material will be stored on site with no buffer zone.

30 During the 2020 bushfires, I was a resident of Moss Vale. I was advised to watch out for ash and embers from the fires in Bundanoon 15 kilometres away. I'm going to have skip some bits. GHD advised you in your meeting that the plant would be one of the most advanced facilities in Australia, probably the most advanced, and probably one of the most advanced in the world. And yet, later on admitted that they have not actually have a detailed design. I find this  
35 contradiction, lack of detail and rigour concerning, and bordering, quite frankly, on the cowboy. The enormity of the risks associated with this project are extreme.

I then make reference to the four special activation precincts in New South Wales. They have a 30-day approval process, because they are purpose built for these  
40 types of projects. And there is no need for such an extensive list of mitigations or conditions of consent. The key drivers are to make it attractive for businesses like this that the government might think it needs, to set up in these regional areas.

45 The Parkes Special Activation Precinct has set up with Brightmark. They will have, I think it's 200,000 tonnes of plastic recycled there. And the community supports it. This is an example of excellent project planning by the New South Wales Government, and this is the type of site that should be found for a project of this size and scale.

Experience tells us that at some stage during construction or operation of these projects, mitigations and conditions of consent will fail. And they are simply not implemented appropriately by the project proponent or its contractors. If this project is approved, the residents of the Southern Highlands and indeed, you, Mr Minister Paul Scully and the DPHI, can only hope that such a failure is not manifested in irreversible consequences. We can hope that the failure of a mitigation is one extra truck, and not a catastrophic fire or the pollution of the Sydney water catchment area.

It's just not the right site.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker, Wayne Pratt.

**MR WAYNE PRATT:** First, my thanks to the Commission for the chance to speak. My name is Wayne Pratt and along with my family, I've lived in the Highlands for 10 years.

I have a sustainable investment business and that's here in the Highlands. My wife's retail clothing business is 400 metres away from here. And my two teenage daughters are completing their HSC studies at Moss Vale TAFE. And with immaculate teenage timing, one of them just sent me a message saying, "Dad, make sure your fly is up." Dad's response: "Get off the live feed and do your homework."

Now, our family connection to this place goes back a lot further. My grandfather was born on Parkes Road, Moss Vale in 1904. And my great grandmother was born on Parkes Road, Moss Vale in 1887. That's 1,200 metres from the Plasrefine site.

I'll confine comments today to the microplastics issue, and I'm sure the commissioners are at the point where the mention of microplastics, they break out in hives. But that goes to what I see as the critical issue that overrides everything else in here, despite all the other issues that should fail this project.

Now, I've been in the financial advisory and investment management businesses for over 25 years, and 6 years of that were focused on capital raising for recycling businesses. Food waste recycling, solar panel recycling, polystyrene recycling, and plastics recycling. We built recycling plants, we imported recycling equipment, and I've walked the production lines of a lot of recycling plants.

So I'm not expert, commissioners, but I have some experience. Now, we quit that area because the scientific literature was making it abundantly clear that large amounts of recycling was simply long-term pollution and poisoning, greenwashed as sustainability.

I'll walk through some key issues bluntly and plainly and hopefully not get rounded up by the bell. Microplastics are newish, I keep hearing this, I keep seeing

it in our reports as “it’s an emergent problem”. Well, yes and no. They were defined in 2005, and the first scientific report on possible health impacts was 2015. But turn to this year, in 2024, 10 months so far this year, and the scientific peer reviewed journals, there’s over eight-and-a-half thousand articles now on microplastics just in this year. So I contend it’s not an emergent problem. Godzilla is not surging up the harbour under a weight of water. Godzilla has come out of the water and is stomping around downtown. We know about this issue.

Now, microplastics are highly toxic. The list of diseases – and we’re hearing more and more of them – but direct links now to the horrifying extent of disease. Heart attacks, strokes, asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, sperm counts, ovarian scarring, endometriosis, motor neurone diseases including multiple sclerosis, immune-compromised diseases, Alzheimer’s, dementias, and early onset varieties of both of those, and cancer.

Now, to turn to the Journal of Toxicology reports from 2024, I’ve got one quote I want to read into the record. “Microplastics may potentially trigger increased cancer risks. Recent studies have revealed an increased incidence of colorectal cancer among workers in plastic and rubber industries, suggesting potential links between occupational exposure to plastic-related compounds and cancer risk. Moreover, microplastic particles have been detected in various cancer tissues, including lung, gastric, colorectal, and cervical tumours.” I would suggest that that puts considerable doubt on the desirability of a job in the Plasrefine plant.

Microplastics are persistent. They break down over a thousand-year period. Think about that. If we were standing here today dealing with toxic waste released by William the Conqueror, he would be William the Utter Bastard, not William the Conqueror. They’re invasive and pervasive. Last night I read a Turkish study that was showing microplastics are now in 75% of honey samples. They invade individual plant and animal cells. Every single human organ now yields microplastic samples autopsy. In fact, a report from this year shows that half a per cent of my brain and each of the commissioner’s brains, is now made of microplastic. And that’s doubled since 2016.

Now, as far as I can see, and given my involvement in large projects, I have been an applicant for State Significant Developments, so I do know a thing or two about the process. I can’t see a single expert report on microplastics. There’s none. Not from the Commission, not from the Department, not from the EPA or Sydney Water or Sydney Health. I’ll let that stand.

Let me make a very brief comment on the economic damage this project has already done. Across 2021 and 2022, I worked with two separate groups, one in the development of green and sustainable building and construction technology. The other in the research and design and production of green hydrogen, a sustainable energy source.

In each case, they were negotiating to buy land at the SHIP. A total of a hundred hectares that they were looking to buy, and a purchase cost of near \$40 million.

Both walked away because of the looming threat of Plasrefine. One is now intending to build its facilities in Indonesia. So, the project hasn't undermined the SHIP, it's sunk it.

5 Commissioners, if you don't know the specific processes and equipment to be used, you can't quantify the risk and the damage. What I can tell you is if you're not hotly debating technicalities like the type of sieving process, whether it's in between the shredding and the washing units, whether you're using disfiltration or membrane and bioreactors, for God's sake, call for the expertise on that.

10 [Unintelligible 01:56:14] ... will release twice as much microplastic as all the others. And if you don't know which one it was, then we have a rogue project, commissioners.

15 We will have a site where more than a hundred trucks a day will have microplastics stuck to them and going in and out. A site where, depending on which figure you take from the Journal of Hazardous Materials Advances, somewhere between seven-and-a-half million and 15 million kilograms of toxic waste will go into our and Sydney's water supply. If we were in something like  
20 utopia or the thick of it, I'd be calling this thing an omni-spewer.

Commissioners, you risk sowing the wind with microplastics up here in the Highlands, where there's only about 65,000 of us. But you will wreak the whirlwind of microplastic down in Sydney, where you risk permanently poisoning  
25 the drinking water of five-and-a-half million people.

This can never be the right site.

30 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Paula Zaja.

**MS PAULA ZAJA:** Wow. I'm absolutely in awe of our community. Good morning, commissioners, fellow local residents and guests. My name is Paula and I'm a relatively new resident to Moss Vale.

35 My husband and I decided to build our home that we thought we'd retire in one day. We were drawn to Moss Vale for several reasons, as I'm sure most people here – the lifestyle, the charm of our township, the rural landscape, and most importantly, because I was led to believe that Plasrefine was not coming to Moss Vale.

40 I was raised by parents of a generation where commonsense was the norm. This commonsense was usually shared in the form of stories or sayings, ultimately consequences if we played with commonsense. Times have changed, but one thing will never change. You mess with commonsense you will get consequences.

45 Over the last week as I've given thought to how best to express my thoughts on this project, my parents' wisdom just seemed to get louder in my mind. Commissioners, I hope that these words resonate with you when it comes to

making a stance on commonsense. I'm of Croatian background so I'll say in Croatian first [speaks in Croatian 01:58:38]. Listen when someone shows you who they are.

5 Imagine it's Christmas Eve, you're preparing for the festivities of the next day. You've got family coming, friends, children, grandchildren all coming to share the day with you. Your spouse brings in a plain, white unmarked envelope found in your mailbox. Suddenly your life as you know it will never be the same again.

10 This envelope contains details that you're going to have new neighbours. Australia's largest plastic recycling factory on your doorstep. Is this a joke? Is it real? Who can you talk to about this? Who could you even talk to on Christmas Eve about this? Can you imagine the stress, the anxiety these families endured over those next few weeks while the rest of Australia was on summer holiday mode? Who would intentionally deliver this message on Christmas Eve in this manner?

15 Again, I hear my father. Listen when someone shows you who they are. On Monday, we heard Nancy Zheng say that they look forward to being a part of our community and building social trust. Really? Social trust. As long as that proponent uses the words "sensitive recipients" to describe our community, there will never be social trust. I believe the term GHD struggles with is "neighbour, humans, families".

20 Plasrefine also looks forward to building social trust, yet they continue to use their artist's impression of their proposed monolithic structure without the smoke stacks. Does this language or this intentional manipulation show that Plasrefine would like to build social trust in the community? Again, listen when someone shows you who they are.

25 One can learn a lot about people from what they lack. If they lack honesty, they'll distort the truth to fit their narratives. If they lack integrity, they'll justify their wrongdoings. Time and time again we see this.

30 Another three powerful words my parents have often said to me as a child, and I'll be honest, they still say it to me today, haunted me this week. [Speaks Croatian 02:00:44]. The literal translation: brain in your head. We often heard this as a warning from our parents to use commonsense. To think of consequences before we challenge commonsense. It's kind of perfect for this scenario, isn't it?

35 DHPI, regardless of the merits you believe this project to have, what were you thinking? Australia's largest plastic recycling plant less than 250 metres to homes, 90 metres to land zoned for more homes, and metres from waterways that feed into the water catchments that supply the drinking water for Sydney and Goulburn. [Speaks Croatian 02:01:25]. What were they thinking?

40 How could any sane, logical person choose to risk our drinking water? Technology to treat water and prevent contamination, no matter how well it is

packaged, presented or marketed, will always carry a risk of failing. What happens then? Will the employees of the DPHI be made personally responsible and accountable for the decision, should Sydney's drinking water be contaminated and undrinkable?

5

It's crazy to think if you go 40 kilometres up the road to visit Burrendong Dam, which also feeds into Sydney's drinking water, and you'd like to walk down to the water's edge, guess what you will find? You can't, because all access is fenced off. You cannot get to the water. Why? Because our precious drinking water needs to be protected from all contamination threats.

10

Yet here in Moss Vale, the DPHI believes it is safe and acceptable to build Australia's largest plastic recycling factory within metres of water that flows into Sydney's drinking water catchment. It's truly absurd. Absolutely no [speaks Croatian 02:02:32].

15

Nobody, nobody, no organisation, no government department should ever have the right to risk our drinking water. It's that simple. If we were to see a domesticated animal in someone's yard that was deprived of access to fresh clean water, that owner would be deemed irresponsible. Activists would call in for animal welfare. But DPHI deems it acceptable to build Australia's largest plastics factory within metres of where our water originates from to supply Sydney and Goulburn. It just makes no sense.

20

Commissioners, I appeal to your [speaks Croatian 02:03:20]. In February 2021, your colleagues refused consent for South32's proposed coal mining extension, based on the potential for long-term and irreversible impacts on integrity of a vital drinking water source. The words that were used were, "It is not in the public interest." Plasrefine in Moss Vale is not in the public interest.

25

30

If your decision is to support the Plasrefine project, then you effectively are hand delivering that unmarked envelope, but not to faceless sensitive recipients. That envelope's going to all the people of the Southern Highlands, Sydney and Goulburn.

35

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and be heard.

**DR HELEN MALOOF:** Hello, my name is Dr Helen Maloof. I'm a Doctor of Medicine currently working as a GP in the Southern Highlands. I've lived in the Highlands for 18 years. Prior to this, I was a Director of Medical Services for the Royal Australian Navy. I will focus on the medical evidence for organ penetrations not previously discussed. And some of the speakers here, it's pretty much a medical theme.

40

Plastic is a class of polymers that are usually synthesised from fossil fuels. Rather than decompose, many plastic objects break into smaller and smaller fragments of varying geometrical forms. They're called microplastics if they're between 1 micron and 5 millimetres in diameter, and they're called nano-plastics if they are

45

less than 1 micron in diameter.

5 Most plastic products typically contain additives such as stabilisers or plasticisers. As plastics break down, they either form fragmentation particles with or without toxic chemical additives, or the toxic chemical additives divide off because the plastic is slippery. So the plastic functions as a vector which carries and transports toxic chemical additives as well as persistent organic pollutants.

10 The chemical additives are either endocrine disruptors or non-endocrine disruptors. Of the endocrine disruptors, the main three chemical additives are the bisphenols, the phthalates and the PFAS. Microplastics enter the human body through ingestion, inhalation or trans-dermally.

15 Now, out of those eight-and-a-half thousand articles this year, I have reviewed 177 of them, and I'll outline just some pertinent issues for time. So, Raffaele Marfella undertook study on microplastics in Atheroma, published in the New England Journal of Medicine this year. In this study, 304 patients underwent carotid endarterectomy, which is a bore out of your carotid arteries and getting the plaque out of that. They sized the carotid plaque specimens at surgery and they analysed the specimens. Polyethylene was detected in carotid artery plaque in 150 patients out of 300. Thirty-one patients also had measurable amounts of PVC, so that's 20 50%.

25 Patients with microplastics in atheroma have an increased risk of stroke, cardiovascular disease, and death. Cornelia et al., in 2024, have shown that microplastics increase oxidative stress, which is a known factor implicated in accelerating the aging of organisms.

30 This year published in the Journal of American Medicine, Luis Fernando et al. analysed the olfactory bulbs (so, the smell sense in the brain) of 15 deceased individuals and detected the presence of microplastics in the olfactory bulbs of 8 of these, over 50%. This suggests the olfactory pathways a potential entry route for microplastics into the brain substance.

35 Tiffany Eberhard et al. published a systematic review in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology in 2024. She found that when comparing indoor and outdoor sampling, calculated inhalation exposures from the indoor samples were greater than from the outdoor samples. Inhalation exposures differed between age groups, with infants having the highest calculated dose values for all locations, followed by preschool-aged children, pregnant women, 40 adolescents, and non-pregnant adults.

45 Naveen Kumar published Microplastics – A Growing Concern as Carcinogens in Cancerous Aetiology in July 2024. He found that microplastics induced DNA damage and oxidative stress to trigger inflammatory responses and dysregulate cellular pathways, contributing to cancer development.

Lastly, due only to time, Erhan Demirelli et al. published in the BioMed Central



Urology Journal in May 2024, a study which examined 12 men’s prostate tissue and essentially 6 of them were found to have microplastics – 50%.

5 I’ll skip through the endocrine disruptor chemicals, because I think they’ve been really well covered. There’s a vast and rapidly growing body of literature on adverse health effects of EDCs. Their chemicals called xenohormones, whose structure is similar to that of naturally occurring endocrine hormones. For example, oestrogen and testosterone. The Endocrine Society’s Authoritative Guide emphasises that there is no likely safe dose of exposure to EDCs.

10 With BPA, as a summary, it exhibits oestrogenic effects and has been associated with adverse health effects such as congenital malformations, endometriosis, impaired fertility, polycystic ovarian syndrome.

15 Phthalates effect oestrogen and testosterone levels and function and block thyroid function, leading to pre-term birth, low birthweight, childhood obesity, glucose intolerance. And PFAS’s are known as the forever chemicals, and they are shown to lower semen and quality of semen.

20 I will refer just briefly to one other quick study, which was published this year, 10 days ago, in Australia, by Swinnerton et al. And this study found that the concentration of particles was up to 2,910 times higher during periods of shredding. The max concentration of particles ranged from 22,000 to 1.3 million particles per centimetre cubed during shredding.

25 So, essentially, there is no likely safe level of exposure to EDCs. With increasing evidence of transgenerational and epigenetic effects, I’ll not go into all the deleterious effects with all of the chemicals, but they are abundant. We’re only just beginning to understand the effects of this burgeoning mega industry.

30 Overall, addressing microplastic pollution requires interdisciplinary collaboration. But moreover, evidence to base decision making, leading to responsible decision making when so many lives are at stake.

35 **MR MILLS:** Jennifer Slattery.

40 **MS JENNIFER SLATTERY:** Good morning. My name is Jennifer Slattery. I’m President of the Southern Highlands Landcare Network. We are an independent not-for-profit network that supports Landcare activities as well as other environmental groups and individuals, with a common purpose to work together in the Southern Highlands to care for the environment.

45 We are concerned with the impacts of this development on the area’s riparian zones. The Southern Highlands Innovation Park precinct and surrounding area comprise a network of watercourses dotted with dams, providing important corridors and habitat for riparian-dependent fauna such as turtles, amphibians and reptiles.

It's noted the SHIP master plan has been designed to protect the precinct's riparian zones. It's also acknowledged that the Plasrefine development proposal has attempted to protect riparian zones within its footprint. How effective the protection will be is dependent on the detailed plans and their implementation.

5

But there is another side to this development. The proposed north-south access road required to service the Plasrefine development. The road will be carrying a large volume of heavy vehicles, and it appears it's only required to support this one specific development. It particularly the southern end and Braddon Street intersection, impacts the same riparian zone that the development proposal is trying to protect. But there doesn't seem to be a road design or environmental assessment on the construction and operation of this road.

10

What impacts will the road have on the riparian zone? How will adverse impacts be managed? Environmental impact on the road design, construction and operation needs to be fully and appropriately addressed before a decision on the Plasrefine development proceeds.

15

We are also concerned with microplastics entering the Wingecarribee River. We note studies of a studied state-of-the-art recycling plant in the UK undertaken by the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow found that 6 to 13 per cent of the plastic recycled was released into the waterway. We are concerned about a similar release of microplastics into the Wingecarribee River and its catchment if the Plasrefine facility proceeds.

20

25

There doesn't seem to be information the lay person can understand on the extent of microplastics expected to be discharged into the wastewater by Plasrefine's operations. We just know that they will be. As development concession condition 932D references, Plasrefine reducing microplastics in wastewater being released into the river.

30

We are also concerned with the potential microplastics entering the terrestrial environment through the use of sewerage sludge biosolids as fertilisers, and the repeated application of those fertilisers. Are wastewater emission standards that specifically target microplastics as a contaminant of concern in place? If not, why not? If so, how do the standards compare with the world's best practice?

35

Is a broad-scale microplastic assessment or similar proposed for the Wingecarribee River catchment to obtain baseline data on microplastic levels? The New South Wales Government is undertaking this in 120 coastal estuaries, but it appears not for inland waterways. These are just a few questions that come to mind regarding the management of microplastics in our environment.

40

Renowned water expert Dr Ian Wright is an Associate Professor in Environmental Science at Western Sydney University, has raised issues regarding the current health of the Wingecarribee River and, in his opinion, the poor licensing.

45

We are concerned that levels of microplastics released to Plasrefine operations will

5 accumulate and exacerbate the environmental stresses and health of the Wingecarribee, impacting the platypus and other fauna that rely on the river, Sydney's drinking water, and our swimming, fishing and kayaking spots. To the commissioners, they're our wonderful swimming spots, and if you want a spot a platypus, go down to Berrima.

10 The precautionary principle needs to be adopted due to the uncertainties surrounding microplastic contamination from plastic recycling centres. We don't want the Wingecarribee River catchment to become a toxic microplastics hot spot. We need plastic recycling, we know that, but we also need to protect our waterways and riparian zones from microplastic contamination.

It's not the right spot.

15 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. And next speaker, Sharda Ewart.

**MS SHARDAE EWART:** Hello. I'm Sharda Ewart and I grew up in the Southern Highlands. And yes, I have some prepared notes.

20 I would like to speak to statements made by David Gamble, the Senior Technical Director at GHD and Project Director for Plasrefine, that need to be considered as a part of this assessment process. Mr Gamble made a statement about the facility being fully enclosed. However, it's acknowledged in the documents provided to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure that there are roller doors large enough to fit semi-trailers that would need to remain open long enough for trucks to enter and exit, amongst other access ports. There are no air locks for this vehicular access. There are also 33 air vents and an unclear amount of emission stacks.

30 Significantly, GHD has provided images of the factory for presentation to the DPHI, Wingecarribee Shire Council and our community that are purported to be a true representation of the proposed development. But none of them truly reflect the information in the documents regarding the vents, emission stacks or heights of the buildings. Combined with statements like "the building being fully enclosed," it could be suggested that the proponent is attempting to gaslight our community.

40 Mr Gamble has stated that, "Heavy vehicle movements would operate on major roads already approved for heavy vehicles to avoid impact on local roads." This is untrue. Part of the route they're relying on is the newly formed Braddon Road, a residential local road. Mr Gamble's statement that the development avoids impacts on local roads is categorically incorrect.

45 Mr Gamble stated that, "Significant environmental testing and analysis has been done to ensure that any environmental impacts can be mitigated or avoided." As GHD appears not to have conducted the baseline testing required for the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements, this statement appears to be false.

5 In GHD's response to submissions, it's noted that they will attempt to mitigate unacceptable noise levels for nearby sensitive receivers, occurring seven days a week, essentially, with community engagement. They did light testing at a time when natural light remained, and have stated that, "Residents will need to remain indoors during windy weather to avoid polluted air."

10 If mitigation and avoidance of light pollution is to conduct testing when there is residual daylight, the mitigation of noise pollution is for nearby residents to spend a lifetime wearing ear protection. And the mitigation of air pollution is for residents to spend their lives inside. Then that tells you enough about the irreconcilable issues and about the lack of buffer zone with adjacent sensitive receivers to the selected site.

15 Mr Gamble stated that they had conducted extensive community engagement. If that was the case, nearby residents would not have been unaware until recently that the project was being proposed. Consistently misleading statements by GHD such as these, demonstrate that the Plasrefine proposal is a deeply flawed endeavour. Perhaps it's the proponent's inexperience in the industry that led them  
20 to the rookie error of selecting a site where there was no buffer zone from existing conflicting land uses.

25 In fairness, the health, safety and wellbeing of our community cannot be risked just because a proponent did not do their appropriate landowner homework as to what the essential factors are to assess in land use, planning for an industry of this size and nature.

30 Finally, as a registered nurse, I would also request that the DPHI organise counselling for our community. As an institution, they have exacerbated the stress imposed by this proposal by their obvious neglect of their role as an assessment authority.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of the speakers scheduled for the morning session. We will break for an hour and return at 1 o'clock for the next speakers. Thank you.

### **LUNCH BREAK**

40 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, we'll now resume. Our next speaker is Ed Rudloff.

45 **MR ED RUDLOFF:** Thank you. Thank you IPC for coming and the community for turning out in support. I live in Moss Vale, roughly about 3 ks away from the proposed factory and moved here roughly about six years ago from Sydney. My concern is that the effects of the plastics that will affect the area in the long-term. My dad back in the 60s and 70s worked in a plastic factory, manufacturing printing of the plastics and what happened was that roughly 40 years, when he was in his 50s roughly he died due to a cancer that affected him and in turn affected 11 out of the 12 people that worked in that factory. They all died roughly in their 50s.

5 So to say with plastics that there's no effect on people is a grave mistake. In turn, my mother also lost three children due to miscarriages and her daughter, my sister, who I moved up here to Moss Vale with to enjoy a new life from Sydney, away from the smog, the traffic, the fumes, died within the first year of an autoimmune system that they didn't know anything about that I can only think would be related to my dad working in plastics as she was conceived at that time.

10 To think that this is going to affect the area in the long-term is shocking and we really should take that in consideration. The microplastics will affect the water, the air and the agriculture in the area such as the vineyards, the bees, the orchards, the paddock to table butchers are in the area and we really need to stop this. It's not the right site, it's far too close to community and it really should be located in a different area, which I can only think such an area may be where the coal mines  
15 actually are. We've stopped Hume Coal from coming into the area, the community was fully behind it. We've only had a short time to stop this. I'm sure if we had longer, the full community would be saying no to this coming into our area.

20 There's so many locations. I hate to say this but the Hunter Valley would be great, in Muswellbrook, where the coal mines are, the rundown power station they're not using anymore. They have the infrastructure, they've done the environment impacts already, so why not locate it up there? It's got the roads for the trucks. Where we are a small community with bad roads already. To have this put into the area would not be good for anyone. So I hope that in the long term you can see  
25 how much this will affect us because in 20 years, 30 years, when kids have got immune problems and people are dying from cancers, who's going to say no, you didn't know?

30 The line's been drawn here from the community saying this can't go in the area, so in 10, 30 years, 40 years' time when people are dying from it, you will be responsible. The government will be responsible. I would only hope that the families and children will get checked now, get the blood tests done so in 20 years, 30 years' time when things do start affecting us all, the class action that we put against the government will show that we were right from the start. It's really not  
35 the right site and I really do hope you take it on board and stop this from happening because burning off recycling and having a recycling factory here isn't the problem.

40 We need to stop plastics full stop. That should be the issue here. Make the change, not the band-aid effect and stop it. We've had so much problems up here from the bushfires to COVID to the financial problems at the moment we're having and now we're going to have a plastics factory here. There's only so much community can take through the stress and the angst and the problems. Thank you for your time.

45 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Annemaree Dalziel. Annemaree here? See whether Susan Chin is here.

**MS SUSAN CHIN:** Good afternoon and sincere thanks to members of the Commission for coming to meet us in person this week. I am speaking today in my capacity as a Wingecarribee resident and a parent with two school aged daughters. I care for all members of this community but today I wanted to speak on behalf of the ones who aren't old enough to have a voice.

The Southern Highlands is a beautiful part of Australia. It is known for its pristine environment that inspires an outdoor lifestyle in the wide, open spaces. Members of our community have built their lives around all types of agriculture, equine pursuits, tourism, vineyards and organic smallholdings. This is why, along with hundreds of other families, have chosen to raise our children here. My daughters and the young people of this community are constantly outside. They jump on the trampoline, climb trees, potter in the garden, ride bikes, play tennis, hockey, soccer, basketball. The list goes on. Slide 1, please. Thank you.

With this in mind I did a bit of Google mapping and do you know what I learned? There are nine schools, five early learning centres and 12 playgrounds and sports facilities within 5 km of the proposed Plasrefine site. That is 26 locations within 5 km of where our young people spend hours every day learning, playing and exercising. I thought it would seem obvious to the DPHI that building one of the largest plastic recycling facilities in the country in this location is simply not appropriate.

I have very real concerns for the detrimental impact the Plasrefine facility will have on surrounding environment and in particular air and water quality. What we do know about Plasrefine is that they will be using heat and chemicals, which are yet to be specified, to break down and reprocess plastic. Recent research from around the world suggests that emissions from such processes can cause damage to the surrounding environment through chemical emissions and microplastics being released into the air and water. This has been said time and time again, so sorry to keep repeating.

Further to this, microplastics can have detrimental effects on organisms of all sizes. They can also absorb, transport and later release PFAS, organic pollutants and heavy metals into the environment. A 2018 study found that students in schools located closer to highways and industrial facilities had higher risks of respiratory and neurological diseases than those located further away.

I find this information particularly concerning because Plasrefine have not documented any specific measurements, data or forecasting regarding pollutant levels that will be released into the air and water. If provision of this data was a mandatory requirement for developments such as Plasrefine, then planning departments could make more informed decisions for zones of these facilities, from homes, schools, playgrounds and sports facilities.

Currently, it seems that appropriate buffer zone is an arbitrary distance. It's one that is deemed acceptable by the DPHI based on the financial strength or the significance of a development to the state's particular needs at the time. As

Plasrefine is unable to provide this data and it is not currently a planning requirement, I have lost trust in the New South Wales planning system.

5 I ask that the Commission seriously consider whether a facility with the very real potential to pollute its surrounding environment should be located within 5 km from homes, riparian waterways and where our children live, learn and play. Slide 2's already up. This map shows the locations where our young people spend most of their time learning, playing outside and exercising. Health departments all around the world recognise that being active and outdoors is vital for people of all  
10 ages to improve mental and physical health. In fact, New South Wales Health is currently promoting a Get Kids Active campaign to encourage our youth to get outside, ride or walk to school and spend at least 60 minutes a day exercising.

15 Plasrefine's proposed location at Moss Vale makes this difficult. Its potential to release pollutants into the surrounding atmosphere completely contradicts this New South Wales Health campaign. How can we confidently encourage our young people to get active outside in potentially compromised air quality that we know can damage our health and especially those of our young people? They are the future of this community. We have a duty of care to take all measures possible  
20 to give them basic human rights, clean air and water in which to live, learn, play and exercise.

We are putting our trust in members of the Commission to make the right  
25 decision. Please help us preserve our way of life, the health of the environment and clean air and water for our future generations. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Just check again whether Annemaree Dalziel's here? Thank you.

30 **MS ANNEMAREE DALZIEL:** Thank you, Commissioners, of the opportunity to speak and my apologies, I believed I was due in half an hour. I also want to thank everyone who's here and everyone who's listening. It's really important that our community takes part in such an important conversation. It's essential to  
35 democracy and I'm really grateful to all the community volunteers over the last four years who've ensured we hear what we need to hear so that democracy locally, statewide and federally can go on.

I've lived in Mittagong for 32 years. I came here with a deep love for  
40 environments and I passionately care for it. I'm involved actively in that zone. With that, I recognise the almighty problem that plastics are presenting to communities and environments and the overwhelming state of them. I can see that that affects – puts enormous pressure on our state politicians as well as our local ones. I understand they're wanting to rush this through. However, like so many  
45 other people, I just need to remind you that this is not a good site for such an enormous facility.

It's inside a water catchment on slopes with, their own reporting tells us, multiple water bodies. We're not talking about closed engineering systems here, we're

speaking about natural environments of seeping soil. This is a porous and permeable environment and any pollution in that is going to have major effects. We know the effects already, science is warning us that microplastics are profoundly problematic for human and environmental health. And yet why would we put a plastics recycling facility with even the smallest chance of accident in a fragile environment which is also Sydney's water catchment?

This is a facility that will sort, wash, heat and convert plastic into pellets and flakes. We don't know how they're going to prevent those escaping into the environment and the possibility that they will is highly problematic for air and water quality as are the volatile chemicals which can be produced by these practices and by these second state practices we're promised.

Secondly, this site is way too close to existing residences, schools, childcare centres and people who live here. We live in a beautiful place with an environment that supports our social and spiritual needs as well as our broader political needs and this is threatening all those things. It compromises local planning, which is done with local knowledge as opposed to the desktop planning which I've read in numerable papers and I've also gone into recent science, all the scientists are saying we need much more research. We need to inform policies, we need to inform the departments who are making these decisions because we know so little.

The other major problem is roads. I mean, it's the classic local government joke, potholes, but how are we going to manage existing beleaguered roads when we have this, another at least 50 trucks a day coming through, where the regulatory structures don't have policing structures to accompany them. This worries me. What about renegade trucks driving through Moss Vale, driving past the schools, who will stop them?

So this is a convenient location for Sydney but it's big and it's risky for us and our air and this is Sydney's air. Any environmental thinking and knowledge which has been human knowledge for millennia tells us that we are all connected. This is not a closed system. Our water is your water. Our air is your air. Our kids are your future. We don't have the regulatory standards to risk this site. It's only when a worst case scenario erupts that it kicks into place. So we need to really address what best practice might be before we give the permission for this to go ahead.

I want to thank you. I want to thank everyone for coming here and listening to my nervous presentation and I ask you to make a good decision for the benefit of all, knowing that what is good for Wingecarribee is in the long run good for New South Wales and Australia. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Jane Etchells.

**MS JANE ETHELLES:** ... to speak here today. Thank you. My name is Jane Etchells and I live 1.8 km from the proposed Plasrefine site. I'm a very concerned resident of Moss Vale and a retired registered nurse with over 40 years' experience and my focus is on the potentially extremely detrimental health impacts of the



proposed facility. I've attached for your information a short list of peer reviewed evidential references back at my speech.

5 You have already heard from many residents and my concerns are very similar to others but I would like to emphasise the impacts for releasing microplastics, nanoplastics and PFAS into the waterways and air on human health. It is well documented that they are carcinogenic, affect fertility of both men and women, cause premature birth and stillbirths, cause birth defects such as neurodevelopmental impairment, impaired lung growth and in young children are a cause of childhood cancer. And they impact on lung health conditions such as asthma and chronic airways disease. There is mounting research showing that the microplastics can accumulate in human tissue and may be linked to endocrine disruption, inflammation and immune response.

15 These alarming concerns are exacerbated as a result of the location of this proposed site. There is not an adequate buffer between the proposed factory and existing housing, childcare centres, schools, residential streets, the main railway line, established businesses, the main town centre of Moss Vale. It is worth noting that the proposed site is only 3.4 km from the Moss Vale post office.

20 Given the number of documented fires that have occurred in plastic recycling facilities in Australia and across the world, this lack of a buffer zone poses a significant fire risk to our community. As you have been made aware, there are not enough firefighting resources in Moss Vale to manage a fire across a 7.7 hectare site that contains hazardous plastics and chemicals. Nor am I aware of an evacuation plan for the town when hazardous flumes of chemical filled smoke erupt from a building during a fire.

30 In addition to the physical health concerns, the overall wellbeing and safety of residents and visitors are also impacted by damage to the road infrastructure due to massive increase in heavy vehicle traffic. Our roads are already severely damaged from rainstorms and fire events. Although the proponent has submitted a new plan to access the factory, it still requires heavy trucks exiting the Hume Highway, to use Taylor Avenue, the main road through New Berrima, then to Berrima Road before they actually are able to turn into Douglas Road and the proposed new access road. This is the main corridor for all traffic from the highway to New Berrima, Berrima and Moss Vale and other locations in the Highlands and is very narrow and winding and damaged. It crosses the rail line at the Boral factory, which does not have any traffic signals or a boom gate but carries heavy freight daily.

40 There is also the issue of who will enforce the heavy vehicle use that are proposed to use the proposed new road. What stops trucks and worker vehicles from using residential streets if they determine this is their quickest route? The number of truck movements will also contribute to road safety hazards, noise pollution and air pollution.

All of this compromises and jeopardises the health and wellbeing of the

community in Moss Vale and across the Southern Highlands, an area which is currently identified by the New South Wales government as a major tourist destination.

5 In conclusion, there may be an argument that research is not yet completed regarding the long-term effects of microplastics and nanoplastics in water and air. However, I would like the commissioners to consider that once we did not know of the long-term effects of the links between thalidomide and pregnant women, asbestos and human health, silicosis from the manufacturing of our kitchen  
10 benchtops, the cancerous effects of PFAS from firefighting and most recently the notable and insidious effects of social media on the young people's mental health. But we do know now about these detrimental effects and as a society are having to manage and treat disease and mental health issues at an enormous cost financially and emotionally.

15 As the evidence and research mounts, why should we wait any longer? Surely we should act now and place plastic recycling facilities in an appropriate buffered and isolated site before people are sick, before water is undrinkable, before the area is no longer liveable. I along with many of my community implore you to reconsider  
20 the application and find that this is definitely not the right site. Thank you very much.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Dr Jacqueline Duc.

25 **DR JACQUELINE DUC:** Primum non nocere. First, do no harm. My name is Dr Jacqueline Duc. I'm a community member, a mother of two and a proud member of the Southern Highlands Greens. I am speaking to you today on behalf of local doctors of the Southern Highlands.

30 I am a dual trained paediatrician and palliative care physician. For the past 12 years I have cared for infants, children and young people who are dying or living and suffering with life limiting conditions. So when I tell you that I have seen tragedy, I have seen tragedy.

35 In medicine, we often consider our planning and management options in terms of numbers. Statistics, possibilities, probabilities. But I'm not here today to talk to you about numbers. I'm here to talk about the fragility of life, the delicate balance between life and death decisions. To talk about human compassion, moral  
40 conscience and what it means to make decisions about other people's lives.

We talk about the precautionary principle in medicine, as in environmental science. A strategy for decision making when hard evidence regarding possible outcomes is lacking. In this instance, we err on the side of caution, taking all reasonable measures to avoid risks that are potentially serious but possible.

45 Those that know me know that I am generally an extremely calm person, fairly unflappable in most situations including those that involve work from cradle grave. But like so many of you here today, I have lost sleep these past few weeks.

I think most of my colleagues would agree with me when I say that losing sleep is actually not a bad yardstick for decision making in medicine. That is to say, will I rest easy and sleep tonight knowing that the decision I made with my patient today was the right one.

5

Commission, I don't envy the job you have as I'm sure you don't envy mine. But when we talk about the risk to human lives, we can propose that something is unlikely to occur or have consequences. But what about the 0.1% chance that something horrific does occur? What risk is too great a risk to proceed? The potential risk of an uncontrollable fire in the context of this facility being so close to residential homes and a preschool is emphatically unacceptable. How many lives can we afford to lose? I would argue that one life is one life too many.

10

I'm not sure if Nancy is here today or online listening but as a mother to another mother, I beg you to reconsider the current site of Plasrefine. As a person of Asian heritage, I understand the importance of family, responsibility, of [non-English 03:51:02] of honour, dignity, of saving face. I understand the pressures that come with family responsibility, of decisions that have already been made. It would be a great inconvenience to change tack, to work towards finding a better solution, a better and safer site, but not an impossible task.

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We do not want to be your [non-English 03:51:31]. We want to be your collaborative partner, your potential neighbour. We want to find a solution that will benefit us all.

25

In medicine, as in life, there are sometimes immense disagreements that prevent us from moving forward in any productive way or fashion. In these instances, we sometimes call upon our ethics committee. The rationale for this is so that even if something goes wrong five, 10 years down the track, we can look back over the evidence and rest assured with a clear conscience that we made the best possible decision with the information we had at the time.

30

When we look back at decisions made, knowing that we could've put this facility more than 150 to 200 metres away from residential homes, greater than 10 metres away from key riparian waterways that lead to Sydney, what will we say to a class action or a High Court of law? How we will defend ourselves? How will we sleep at night?

35

To the Independent Planning Commission, you are our ethics committee. You are here to not only take into account laws and regulations but to make a decision that may irrevocably change the lives and futures of those seated here in front of you today. I implore you to please consider this in your ultimate decision and help us all sleep easier at night. First, do no harm. This is not the right site. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Rodger Goward.

**MR RODGER GOWARD:** Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Rodger. I live about a kilometre from this site, proposed site.

5 About 13 months ago I suffered the worst day of my life, my wife of 42 years passed away in the Bowral Hospital from the effects of cancer and the treatments to try to extend her life. To witness someone you love dying from cancer is horrible. Myself and my children, grandchildren, her brother and sister, elderly parents. So I know personally the suffering that cancer can cause.

10 If this plant was to go ahead, it will release untold amounts of micro and nanoplastic particles. These particles are odourless, tasteless, invisible and potentially carcinogenic and life threatening. These particles are particularly dangerous for children and young adults.

15 Moss Vale is quite windy, as most people that live there know. It's predominantly from the southwest although these winds during the seasons can go from southerly right round to the east. I'm tending to look at schools, playgrounds and sporting facilities in an approximate radius of 12,000 metres, which is well within the distance that these particles travel. If we start to the northwest of Moss Vale, we have Berrima Primary School and a day-care centre in New Berrima. As we move to the north, a very short distance away, Oxley College, pre-school to Year 12. Three primary schools in Bowral, Bowral High School.

20 Three primary schools in Mittagong. Frensham Girls School and a school at Renwick. Further to the east, there is Chevalier Co-ed College. Quite close to this plant. Then there is on the other side of the planned new South Bowral site, the Highlands Christian School and Glenquarry Primary school. Further to the southeast, there is Moss Vale High School, two primary schools, then the King's School, Tudor House. Avoca Public School. To the south we also have Exeter Primary School.

30 Most, if not all of these schools will have outdoor learning areas, playgrounds and sporting fields. Some have boarders who will not even get a break if the conditions are against them. I did not include the many, many day-care centres that we have in the district and preschools that will all fall within this 12,000 metre radius. There is also many sporting areas, the hockey fields at Welby, the soccer fields in East Bowral, the netball, extremely close to this plant, at Eridge Park. The soccer fields at Moss Vale plus many other all used by children and young adults.

40 A place I'd like to mention personally is the little play area on the Bong Bong Common. Not only will they be subject to the micro and nanoparticles but most likely unpleasant odours. Within that 12,000 metre radius there is approximately 400 square kilometres of catchment area including the weir at Cecil Hoskins Reserve, nearby the Wingecarribee Reserve, Bowral, Mittagong, Moss Vale's drinking water.

45 Most of this run off will go into the Warragamba Dam, so supplying about 5 million New South residents with water for drinking, cooking and bathing. Wingecarribee River will also be subject to direct runoff from the plant either from the stormwater through to the waterways adjacent or any water that is sent to the already heavily loaded Moss Vale treatment works. This project, as people are

saying, is of state significance. This plant will have a direct and deleterious effect on the health and welfare of approximately half of New South Wales' population for generations to come. Thank you.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Christine Hannan.

**MS CHRISTINE HANNAN:** Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Christine Hannan, part of the community for four years and when I came with my family, made a decision to try and contribute, learn and care  
10 for land and wildlife. I joined Landcare and several other community groups. Quickly realised there's a lot to learn. Southern Highlands is a biodiversity hotspot with a range of incredible species and diverse ecosystems.

15 But today I want to talk about risk. We live in an era where workplaces, public and private, are hypervigilant about risk. Risk assessments and risk analysis have become the order of the day, trying to ensure every individual action is accounted for in some way. A family member who works a white collar job recently had training on how to walk up and down the stairs. I get it, stairs can be hazardous and just ask teachers about risk management.

20 However, the process of risk analysis seems inconsistent, highlighted in this very case. As we know the, DPFI has recommended approval for a plastics processing plant using and producing hazardous materials to be located within hundreds of metres of childcare, close proximity to schools and residences and within a fragile  
25 river system, which is part of Sydney's water catchment, an important ecosystem in its own right. What does this tell us about risk and who bears it?

I want to mention two features of this recommendation. Let's consider what is at  
30 risk in the event of operational failure. This is a plant which creates all sorts of compounds and byproducts. Yes, the proponent has ticked the boxes in terms of trying to address safety risks with filtering systems, closed water loops, automatic doors and design and operational features to minimise risk. But in any system, operational failure can occur, human error, extreme weather conditions are two possible scenarios. Should a failure occur, children and environment are  
35 potentially in the frontline of impact. Is this a risk we should take and who actually should be held liable here?

40 In terms of the river, I pay tribute to all the members of Landcare and broader community who have worked for decades trying to maintain and improve the health of the Wingecarribee. As global warming increases, government programs promote the importance of rivers and provide funding for restoration. They recognise healthy rivers are integral to resilient landscapes generating economic benefits and community wellbeing. And river corridors are critical wildlife  
45 refuges. Allowing a plastic plant to be sited within such a biosystem seems to risk this good work and investment and undermine programs whose aim is to restore health to rivers and minimise the risk. So on one and the government is saying rivers are important but not that important.

5 The second aspect of the Department’s recommendation I questioned is the failure to recognise our limited knowledge about plastics. We don’t know what we don’t know. Do a search on processing plastics on Google Scholar and you’ll come up with pages and pages of research. There is a lot we are still to learn and we don’t understand about how the compounds affect our own biology and other living systems.

10 I note with interest that the New South Wales EPA has just closed a plastics research program to identify and investigate potentially harmful chemicals in plastic products and boost the capacity to measure microplastics and the environment. The aim of this program is “To fill knowledge gap.” So why would we locate a processing plant of such a challenging product with potentially damaging byproducts in such a sensitive area when we don’t actually know the consequential risk. This sounds like risk uncertainty.

15 Surely this is a case where risk needs to be assessed at the higher level and not shifted to business and individual. Even though it may be technically permissible to allow this proposal, I suggest it’s safer and less risky to exclude such enterprises from this site. It’s a river system, a water catchment, close to childcare and schools. We need to locate these sort of facilities in appropriate sites and not create secondary problems. In this case it is our children and grandchildren at risk and the river for whom we care. But any community environment that hosts this facility needs to be protected from potential risk.

20 Instead of recommending approval with numerous conditions, it’s like a fractal system, just keeps on going down into smaller and smaller conditions of this conditions system. Instead of recommending approval systems with numerous conditions with the business with which to comply and arguably put at risk of failing, government now has the opportunity to avoid these risks by saying not on this site. We cannot condition our way this confidently and safely. I urge the panel to adopt a principle of harm prevention and reject this application. The potential risk of this project on this site is just too great.

25 **MR MILLS:** Rosalyn Millar.

30 **MS ROSALYN MILLAR:** Good afternoon everyone and thank you, Commissioners, for your time. My name is Ros Millar. I’m speaking today as a rate paying resident of Wingecarribee Shire. My husband and I moved to the Southern Highlands three years ago from Sydney, which is getting crowded and noisy and we had hoped to extend our lifespan here in the fresh air with fresh water and no industrial pollution.

35 We have had a long connection to this beautiful area. My parents honeymooned in Bowral 80 years ago just as World War 2 was ending in August 1945, when it was already a renowned tourist area for fresh air, water and outdoor activities. We rented holiday homes annually in the 1950s and then in 1971, my parents purchased cattle grazing land and a residence in Sutton Forest. A few years later they restored and operated an historic inn, which is still a very popular tourist

location in the Moss Vale area, within 3 km northwest of the Plasrefine site.

5 Our home now is located 2.2 km southeast of the site between Moss Vale High School, with their farm's beautiful sheep and the Church Road playing soccer fields, where hundreds of residents, both younger and older, exercise regularly in our still currently pure fresh Southern Highlands air. I am not one of the people GHD has stated to you last week, "Live 40 km away who are rallying troops." I also note I have never received any information from GHD about the Plasrefine proposal.

10 I am speaker 93 on a list of 130 or so speakers objecting to the proposal. I have listened to most of the 70 day one speakers, both in person and online and more today, who appear to have covered every area of possible objection to this proposal. They have referred to concerns regarding health, both air and water  
15 quality, due to the potential emission of deadly microplastics, which could then further flow into the Sydney water catchment via the extremely close creeks leading to the Wingecarribee River.

20 Secondly, they have spoken of the affront to the amenity of neighbouring residents, a heavy industrial site storing 20,000 tonnes of hazardous plastic within 150 metres of a residential area, imposing heavy vehicle traffic 11 hours per day from 7 am to 6 pm every Monday to Friday. Only five trucks per hour, states GHD. That is in fact 10 heavy truck movements per hour or one every six minutes, the time it takes to boil an egg. There will be also 140 smaller truck movements  
25 per day with respect to the finished products.

30 Another issue raised has been concern for safety, the high risk of fire with little means of putting it out, given the very limited firefighting equipment available both locally and within a 50 km radius and at least one hour's drive away. Such a fire would emit toxic fumes which are not likely to flow straight up, as incredibly alleged in GHD's report and could affect a large area for days as witnessed during bushfires, whilst the facility slowly burns to the ground, right next door to the precious Garvan Institute's research facility. This is the largest plastic recycling facility in Australia, however it has the narrowest, frankly negligible, buffer zone  
35 between it and the neighbouring residential area.

40 Economically, there has been a query as to the economic burden on ratepayers as well as the economic viability of the project. I note that the prior largest recycling facility in Australia was the Advanced Circular Polymers facility in Victoria, with a processing capacity of 30,000 tonnes a year, which opened in 2019 to much fanfare. It had collapsed by 2023.

45 I have nothing to add to the previous speakers' impassioned, erudite speeches. I instead have many more questions to pose. I think you would all know the phrase, "You can't fight city hall." Well, in this instance, city hall, the Wingecarribee Shire Council, has passed a motion at Wednesday's extraordinary meeting, to oppose this proposal. Their objections are in several areas, as set out in the agenda to that meeting. Environment, social, broader economic implications, culture and

governance. Notably, this project undermines Council's state funded strategic framework for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park known as the SHIP. All issues that we ratepayers object to as well and have been raised by former speakers to the panel.

5

This is followed by the heading, "Council budget implications," from which I quote. "Ongoing compliance burdens imposed on Council from unauthorised but likely truck movements on Braddon Road and Beaconsfield Road." My question, how is it possible to ensure that the 100 heavy truck movements and the many other smaller truck movements will only travel on the approved route. Who will police this? The proponent has stated that waste will be coming from Wollongong as well as Canberra and Sydney. What is to stop the trucks coming up the Illawarra Highway, the most direct route, rather than via Appin Road and the Hume Highway, when it will cost the transport company less time and fuel to do so.

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Likely budget implications on long-term operations of the Moss Vale sewer treatment plant to capture and remove microplastics to acceptable levels to meet EPA licence expectations. The Council has submitted that there are current gaps in their treatment plant's ability to capture and remove microplastics. Will the state government finance upgrades or we ratepayers? Is it even possible to capture these micro nanoparticles?

20

Number 3. Long-term compliance burdens imposed on Council to monitor environmental and amenity impacts of the proposed SSD at a residential interface. Will there be air and water monitoring systems required of the proponent? Will there be baseline checks prior to commencement of operation followed by air and water quality checks carried out by the state's EPA? Or will the Council need to impose such requirements? Does it even have the authority to do so? Are there meaningful penalties for breaches, noting that nothing would compensate for compromising the health of our residents or the consumers of the Sydney water catchment.

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I have a lot more but I think –

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**MR MILLS:** Well, you're somewhat over time, so if there's –

**MS MILLAR:** Would you like me to –

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**MR MILLS:** We can obviously take what you have in writing as well but if there's some last points you'd like to make?

**MS MILLAR:** Well, I will actually just say that I note Commissioner Mills that you've said formally that it is not your panel does not assess the proponent and that the work of the DPHI is to assess the proponents and – that's not correct?

45

**MR MILLS:** No. That's not correct either. The law under which we assess things is to assess the proposal itself, not the operator. If you think about it, the operator



could change. There are takeovers of companies all the time. The licensing of an operator of a facility like this is the EPA and they will do an assessment if it is approved.

5 **MS MILLAR:** Okay, well sorry, I've been derailed. I've derailed myself. I apologise to you all. What I'm concerned about is all the conditions that are in the draft approval, which are like promises from the operator. When I –

10 **MR MILLS:** And that will apply to any operator who operates and that's the point of assessing the proposal, we look at aspects of the operation as to how they will impact on many of the things which you've mentioned. It's a distinction between the person and the operation itself, if I can put it in those terms, if that helps.

15 **MS MILLAR:** Okay, well I'm just concerned as to whether we can accept promises. I also am concerned that we heard yesterday that there's going to be a peer review of the EIS, is that correct? Okay, I'll leave that out. I'll just move on to say that in conclusion, Wingecarribee Shire Council is opposed to this proposal. State members of parliament for Goulburn and Wollondilly are opposed to this  
20 proposal.

The federal member for the division of Whitlam, the Honourable Stephen Jones, who holds the ministries of federal assistant treasurer and financial services minister, is also opposed to this development. We live in a democracy, all these  
25 people have been elected to represent us. We should not need to lose sleep and time to present submissions firstly to the Department and now to the panel. How can the opinions of these three tiers of government be ignored? Clearly this is not the right site.

30 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Is Fiona Mitchell available? Fiona Mitchell? Danuta Hulajko?

35 **MS DANUTA HULAJKO:** Could I have slides, please? It's not this slide. Thank you for giving me opportunity to talk about this crucial issue. My name is Danuta Hulajko and I'm a retired town planner. Professor Faisal Hai, who is not far from here in the University of Wollongong, wrote in prestigious International Journal of Science, 19 September 2014, "Plastic pollution has caused long-term lasting harm on a global scale and failure to address this [unintelligible 04:16:08] bring a high risk of irreversible environmental damage, according to thousands of peer  
40 reviewed scientific articles."

Also, Dr Karen Raubenheimer in 24 September 2014 from the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources, said, "That so much more information has become available on the detrimental impact of plastic since a landmark original study."  
45 She also wrote that, "After 20 years of research, there's clear evidence on the harmful effect from microplastic pollution on a global scale." We spoke about physical harm to wildlife and fauna and flora, so I will skip that topic. Endocrine disruptors, I'll come back to that.

5 Added to this is the fact that microplastics are persistent contaminants and once in the environment, they are virtually impossible to remove. This is not my opinion, this is scientific opinion. There are still unknown but during the 20 years since our first study, the amount of plastic in our ocean has increased by 50%. Only further emphasises the present need for action. In my own research, I've been researching this for four years, that worldwide production of plastic has doubled since 2000.

10 A significant amount of microplastic has been emitted from plastic recycling facility over last 40 years. Previous research, this is from the research of Professor Faisal Hai, previous research has indicated that plastic recycling has to be largest generator of plastic material. Therefore, in my opinion, as a town planner, the existing state and local government legislation alone, it's insufficient to address the challenges. It is so important that United Nations Plastic Pollution Treaty  
15 currently undergoing with fifth draft is going to be deliberated in November 2015. [unintelligible 04:18:18] that slide. So I forgot about slides because they're out of order.

20 Basically, we all know on Monday one of the speakers show us – I'm on p 2 now, basically LEP, what is allowed in general E4 industrial. Now, industrial and what is permitted with consent. So permitted with consent any other development which is not specified in item 2 and 4, which is an anonymous use. However, what is prohibited is heavy industrial storage establishment.

25 When we go to E5, I'm on p 4, when we go to E5, heavy industrial, you see permitted with consent is hazardous storage establishment. So I went to LEP on p 5, I went to Wingecarribee LEP 2010 and under definitions, what is hazardous industry? Means a building or place used to carry out the industrial activity that would when carried out and when on measures proposed to reduce or minimise its  
30 impact of the locality have been employed, including, for example, measure to isolate the activity from existing or likely future development on other land in the locality pose a significant risk in the locality to human health, life or property. (B) To the biophysical environment.

35 Now, definition of LEP says hazardous industries [unintelligible 04:19:54] heavy industry. Exactly, hazardous storage means establish building and et cetera which cannot harm the basically human life. Appendix 3 of the LEP of SEPP 33 is basically out of date. Why are we looking in appendix 3, slide 3, when we have hazardous industry, petrochemical, petrol station, but plastic is made from  
40 naphtha, from petrol. So how one way petrol station can be hazardous and but plastic recycling cannot be?

45 So therefore the New South Wales environmental planning legislation and all relevant legislation should be amended. I've done thorough assessment of all material safety data sheet over the years and based on my detailed analysis of this, all this plastic recycling are basically carcinogen.

So I just would like to make one more point. So I've started analysing, for

instance, ABS, which stands for a very long name, so I am on slide 7. So material safety data sheet for ABS it says not plastic like hazardous in polymeric stat, which means, you know, as we look at the plastic. However, if you look at point 7(1) they say actually they haven't done any studies, lack of data. They say actual toxicity, we don't know. However, I've analysed what actually this ABS includes.

So ABS includes acrylonitrile and styrene. So I went into research what is styrene means. So I'm on – hasn't got page. Anyway, it's highlighted. So it says this is what is in ABS. "Danger!. Flammable liquid and vapour. Harmful to swallow, inhale or absorb in skin, skin irritation, [unintelligible 04:21:55] cancer, [unintelligible 04:21:57] which is basically a burst effect. [unintelligible 04:22:00] point 31 degrees Celsius only. Then what else is in that [unintelligible 04:22:06]. So acrylonitrile. So the fact sheet said, "This carcinogen, handle with extreme caution. Children handle carefully because it's [unintelligible 04:22:23], as I mentioned, burst effect and the list goes on.

So how, in conclusion, how plastic recycling facility can be considered, how we can think that something is so flammable and it's evident – it's not my work, it's scientific evidence, can be considered appropriate in the general industrial? It's heavy industrial. General doesn't mean hazardous or toxic industrial. Therefore, this is not the right zoning, this is not the right site.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Just check again, is Fiona Mitchell available? No, okay, we'll move on to Stirling Schunemann.

**MR STIRLING SCHUNEMANN:** Thank you, everyone, and thank you to the Commissioners. As per my email, I was hoping perhaps to get a little bit of extra time if possible. Otherwise –

**MR MILLS:** We'll just see how that goes. I have given a lot of latitude to at least a dozen people today.

**MR SCHUNEMANN:** Yes, I understand. I understand. Look, there's a bit of content that I want to get through and I will do my best to try to get it as quickly as possible. My name is Stirling Schunemann, I work for The Environmental Group Limited. We are delivering the engineering solutions for air pollution control and various other industrial areas and before you jump to that point, no, we have not been paid to be here. I got invited by Kylie Roberts-Frost, who presented on Monday. She spoke about the fire risks to this facility and also her experiences with a MRF in Canberra.

I am an educated aeronautical engineer, I've got 15 years' experience in industrial filtration. I've done work in industrial air pollution control. I'm currently working in waste sorting and I also have some experience in the concentration of PFAS from dilute water and also the upcoming technologies in PFAS destruction.

Technology is available to effectively control these emissions. Companies like ours need to put the solutions together for that, both in air and in water and the

control of that, of PFAS in water is available as well, but upcoming and new. I am not covering the topics of PFAS.

5 In my experience, I have seen the good, bad and ugly with resource recovery in – sorry? Sorry?

**MR MILLS:** Everyone gets the opportunity to speak and present. Please do not interrupt. It's only fair. It's respectful. Thank you.

10 **MR SCHUNEMANN:** Thank you. I'm open for questions later. Sorry, if you want to come and ask some questions, please come and ask them afterwards. As I've said, I've seen the good, the bad and the ugly in this space and from my experience, it's not really who owns or operates a facility, it's not because  
15 technologies or engineering solutions are not available. In my experience, the issue is around enforcing these facilities to ensure that they comply with their conditions and also that they maintain the equipment to perform as it should.

20 Next slide, please. What I've compiled here is a very quick high level flow of how we would go about trying to solve and maintain the air pollution aspects of a facility like this. Companies like ours, when we sign up and sell a product, we sign ourselves up to guarantees which have financial penalties and those guarantees are tied back to the conditions of consent in most cases and also occupational health and safety requirements and the like.

25 Next slide, please. So here is a really simple diagrammatic explanation of this process of where the material is treated. At the beginning you receive your pre-processed plastics that have come from your yellow bin recycling bins and some other sources. They might be in bales or they might be loose. If it's in a bale,  
30 the bale is broken open and then it is transported on a series of conveyors for sorting.

35 What you want to do is you want to then sort out all the same types of plastics into the same stream so that then you can work with them. That is often done with what's called an optical sorter and there's a series of conveyors that then continues on and then you'll then shred that material. And there's a lot of issues around the particulate that can be generated in shredding and I'll get to that later. More conveyors later, you'll drop the shredded material into washing process, which is run on water, and after that more conveyors further on for the extruding process.

40 Next slide, please. So if we were to look at this process and how we would look at maintaining the emissions of particulate and odours and I'll get to the odours a little bit later, you look at the whole process and see where your point source emissions are. Where there is a point source emission, you put a hood and an extraction point of air. That will be done at the optical sorters, they sort with air,  
45 you're going to get emissions at that point.

But the plastic is quite [unintelligible 04:27:23] shredder. We put very large volumes of air over shredders to ensure any of the material that comes off a

shredder gets drawn away into the treatment system and that continues further on, wherever the conveyor drops the material, we then put a hood and pick up any particulate that might be generated at that point. I've left the extruder off of this point at the moment but what we'll jump to is how we treat the emissions that we pick up from these pick up points.

Next slide, please. So the air which is picked up from those earlier treatment processes we'll put through what's called a bag filter and this is not a novel piece of technology, it's actually used in almost every industrial piece of equipment. And these bag filters have got effectively filters and the media is not that much different to what you would have when you've got your face masks and you get those media in a broad range of different materials, everything from very crude filtration to very high levels of filtration and that would be determined about what we need to achieve to achieve the emissions limits as per the consent conditions.

The bags blow, the material is blown off and it falls into a hopper and the filtered air comes out of that through a fan, up a stack and that's the point where companies like ours have to guarantee what the emissions would be and ensure that they stay compliant.

Next slide, please. So now we move on to the extruder. The extruder also is a source of particulate but the volatile organic compounds. I've had some discussions with extruding manufacturing companies. These extruders are fitted with points to draw out specific areas where VOCs are present, which those are the lines that you can see there but also a larger hood just to pick up any fugitive emissions around the machine. That is then taken away to another dust or fume extraction system.

Next slide, please. Similarly to the last one, want to take out all the particulate and [unintelligible 04:29:12] baghouse it's just a filter, an air filter, again we can choose the grades that are needed. What goes through next and this is really, really simple, there's other technologies available but the simplest way to think about it is activated carbon. Activated carbon is really effective at removing volatile organic compounds. The face masks that people use for painting facilities and the like [unintelligible 04:29:33] remove the VOCs to keep the air that they breathe safe. That is the sort of technology that is used but at an industrial scale in this plant. Again, through the fan, up a stack and again another point of compliance, there's sampling points there where the [unintelligible 04:29:49] companies will take measurements to ensure the system is doing what it should.

Next slide, please. I'm really flying through this. Okay, so what about all the emissions within the treatment space that don't get picked up by the specific treatment points? Things fall off conveyors, there's material that falls on the floor, people sweep floors. That is where you get down to your general facility ventilation and it wouldn't be too different to what you see in industrial plants where you've got all the ventilation points on the ceiling. That system has one big key point though and that is to try to keep the facility under negative pressure. We want air to leak in, we don't want any contaminated air or material to leak out of

the facility. This is the same technique that is usually used for sewage treatment facilities when you've got houses next door and you don't want to have hydrogen sulphide leaving the plant and it can be an offensive odour.

5 So when you come to [unintelligible 04:30:40] system, you look at what other doors are open, ensure that you've got say 1 metre per second of inrush of air when the doors open to ensure that anything – that the particulate does not leak out and only air leaks in. This is the approach that is typically used and this again just goes off to a filtration.

10 I've got one last slide, please. Next slide. When it comes to water, now a facility like this, they always use – they'll always prefer to use tank water which is captured but it is captured to the main water supply. The water is recirculated for the [unintelligible 04:31:15] purposes, so you can actually send the water round and round and you use air to extract any of the plastics or any other material that's within the contaminants. Coincidentally that's actually been found to actually take out a fair bit of PFAS but not all of it in accordance with results that I've seen.

15 That is a fairly good approach to removing microplastics but it doesn't remove all of it and at the end of the day, contamination doesn't [unintelligible 04:31:40] systems and you do need to send water out to sewer. But other plastic recyclers, including the existing plastic bottle recycling facilities [unintelligible 04:31:51] they filter the water before they discharge it to sewer. And again, when you're filtering the water that you discharge, you've got a huge range of filters you can choose, anything from a [unintelligible 04:32:01] all the way down to [unintelligible 04:32:05] using a membrane. So the options of how far – the microphone stopped.

20 **MR MILLS:** I think that –

30 **MR SCHUNEMANN:** I'm almost done. I'm done.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** No, you've had more time than anybody.

35 **MR MILLS:** I think –

**MR SCHUNEMANN:** Anyway, I am done. I am pretty much done.

40 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. I think we'll have to call it there.

**MR SCHUNEMANN:** That's the slides –

45 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Grant Figtree. Grant, I understand you may require a little bit of additional time as well.

**MR GRANT FIGTREE:** [unintelligible 04:32:32].

**MR MILLS:** Yes. Thank you.

**MR FIGTREE:** Thank you. I think so, can you all hear me? My name is Grant Figtree. I'm a long-term highlander. I've consulted to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, to various boards of investment around Asia, to the Australian government and to many private companies in industrial development for about 30 years. I've also lectured in industrial development and written world's best practice in a number of sectors.

I am absolutely astonished that DPHI has recommended approval on such inadequate documentation. And even more astonished that the DPHI has believed it without question. I've had two days to study this problem seriously and here are some of my findings.

Firstly and most concerning is the fact that persistent organic pollutants, POPs, as they call it, has been identified around some recycling plants around the world and in products from recycled plastic and these POPs are killers. I quote from the European Chemical Association. "POPs are persistent organic pollutants that persist in the environment, accumulate in living organisms and pose a risk to health and environment. They can be transported by air, water or migratory species across borders and they reach areas where they have never been produced or used."

POPs are amongst the most toxic chemicals in the world. They are regulated under the Stockholm Convention as is the waste from POPs. But yet according to IPEN, which is the International POPs Elimination Network, which contains over 700 NGOs, somehow POPs are getting into recycled products and into the surrounding environment.

Secondly, as far as I can see, there is no current technology to contain the hazardous plastic particles produced during recycling. Thirdly, there are over 4,200 hazardous chemicals in plastics but recycling increases the toxicity of these chemicals and the resin itself is more unstable. I discovered that in the USA, which claims to have the world's best practices for recycling technologists, recyclers call themselves manufacturers to avoid harsh zoning regulations. Does that sound familiar to you guys? They lie routinely in their presentations and reports. They make empty promises in their EIAs and EPNs.

The nine largest US recyclers are located in justice communities, not to attract workers and they're the poorest communities in the USA, but they're not there to attract workers but to avoid class action. All recyclers make hazardous waste yet despite that, five of the nine largest haven't even registered as producers of hazardous waste. And despite the sealed and supposedly world best practice processes and factories, there have been explosions, airborne leakage, toxic fumes and wastewater in these operations. And the same story continues worldwide, air pollution, wastewater leakage, soil pollution, dust pollution, food contamination, cancerous gases, blood contamination, world health issues and contaminated end use toys, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

But two studies, two, stood out to me particularly. First, in 25 locations worldwide, eggs produced [unintelligible 04:37:15] in the proximity of recyclers contained toxins. And according to IPEN, chickens can absorb the chemicals by drinking contaminated water or by eating contaminated worms or insects because eggs are particularly sensitive to containing toxic. Can I continue a little bit further? That doesn't augur very well for Garvan's day old chicks.

Second, recycling plastic products from China, Indonesia and Russia, when they're measured, they have all contained toxic chemicals including POPs. There's been major toxic fires in Canada, Ghana, Russia, Taiwan, Thailand and the United Kingdom and four in the USA. As I said, I've had two days to do this research and these reports are just a drop in the ocean. What on Earth is DPHI doing for four years? Clearly this facility is guaranteed to be extremely dangerous to this region as safety cannot be guaranteed. We don't want it, as was so eloquently expressed by our new councillors.

If IPC cannot reject it out of hand and DPHI cannot repeal this approval for some reason, I seek that the New South Wales government consider undertaking the following three phase cause of action prior to any further consideration. I stress that this must be done at the applicant's expense. (1) Contract a detailed independent risk report, using the best available independent worldwide consultants with wide ranging terms of reference, including what is world's best practice? The processes and equipment and the process flow, the process risk at every stage, from the transport in to the transport out. A statement of environmental risks and a statement of risk management. Such will require a full revision, an upgrade of Plasrefine's EIS, EIA, EPM, their modelling and a full-blown new business plan before the consultants can even start.

We need also to undertake a proper independent detailed attitude study that the population of the Highlands has towards this facility. And finally, we need to engage independent consultants and again, it's got to be done at their cost, not mine as the taxpayer, but engage independent consultants to establish a set of control procedures for this facility and ensure such is signed off by the stakeholders and the government under New South Wales law. I've seen things been signed off under Hong Kong law or some law over there and you can never get to them. So it's got to be under New South Wales law. And then decide and agree the implementation and the monitoring mechanisms and then sign off and agree on the set of controls with high penalties and compensation plans.

If you do this, sir, I believe Plasrefine will disappear into the ether or if it doesn't, the New South Wales government will have the ammunition to reject the application at hand. And there are about 15 or 20 references behind this.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Ben Olofsen.

**MR BEN OLOFSEN:** Firstly, thank you to the IPC for taking the time to listen to our community and a massive thank you to our community for standing up and coming together and collectively saying no. My name is Ben Olofsen, I'm a local



resident with four children. I was born and raised in the Southern Highlands by chance but have stayed here by choice. Why? Because our Southern Highlands provides a clean, safe and healthy environment for me to raise my children.

5 I, like so many locals, have always held the belief that we can trust in the process and the government departments and that ultimately the right decisions will be made. Unfortunately, that trust and confidence has been lost over the last few years. However, I'm sure based on the information you have heard thus far, that  
10 you will restore our confidence in the system and make what is the only logical decision and reject this application in keeping with the wishes of the entire Southern Highlands community.

As a local real estate agent, I can tell you that a clean, safe and healthy  
15 environment are the same reasons people move here in volumes from all parts but especially Sydney. I can also tell you firsthand that the threat of Plasrefine is already having a negative impact on people wanting to move to the Highlands, with also a significant number of locals suggesting they would move away should  
20 the proposal proceed, which is now directly affecting property values and the businesses within our community that rely on our region for tourism and growth. This proposal affects everyone in our community and not only direct neighbours, as GHD would have you believe.

I understand from the previous session that you're not interested in discussing or  
25 assessing the suitability of the applicant or their representatives. I respect that. However, if it's not you, who is it and where are they? You can answer that.

**MR MILLS:** As I indicated earlier, not sure if you were here at the time.

**MR OLOFSEN:** No, I had to work, sorry.  
30

**MR MILLS:** Okay. It's the EPA.

**MR OLOFSEN:** The EPA are going to do that.

**MR MILLS:** [unintelligible 04:43:54] licences for operations.  
35

**MR OLOFSEN:** Great. If this is a public forum to share the concerns about Plasrefine, then this is a very valid concern and one that must also be addressed. As a Moss Vale resident, my first contact with GHD, the applicant's  
40 representative, was via an unmarked blank envelope in my letterbox, supposedly a neighbour notification, advising that they proposed to direct their 120 plus truck movements per day past my front door and through two school zones, giving me all of two days to respond with any objections. This is only one of many examples of the contempt our local community has been subjected to by GHD and the  
45 applicant.

Another example of this contempt is an extract from GHD addressing air quality and odour, appendix J. Now, I'm sure you guys have read this but I'll repeat it.

5 “People living near the site would be able to manage their exposure to air quality impacts through minimising time spent outdoors.” You know that, don’t you? Yes. So I’ll read it again. “People living near the site would be able to manage their exposure to air quality impacts through minimising time spent outdoors.” Now, this might be acceptable in a third world country but it’s not acceptable in Australia. You simply cannot subject myself or my family or my community to this.

10 So what does this actually look like for the locals? “Sorry, kids. You can’t play outside today as you’ve already been subjected to enough microplastics and toxins this week.” Would you be happy to say this to your kids or grandkids? Don’t make me say it to mine.

15 The applicant and GHD have a proven track record of either incompetence or strategic incompetence but either way the net result is the same. So when GHD say, “People living near the site would be able to manage their exposure to air quality impacts through minimising time spent outdoors,” sadly I believe they are capable of this.

20 For this proposal to be approved, the IPC must be 100% satisfied without a shadow of doubt that Plasrefine poses no risk to the health and safety of the Southern Highlands community and our local environment. On the back of this, you simply can’t entrust Plasrefine with my family and my community’s health and safety. As the final decision makers, you have a duty of care to protect our  
25 community and I implore you based on all of the information you have heard and the very clear wishes of our community that you must also say no to Plasrefine. Thank you.

30 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Lynette Saville. Is Lynette here? Alex Sicari?

35 **MR ALEX SICARI:** Good afternoon, Mr Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Alex Sicari. I’m a qualified architect and property economist with over 18 years’ infrastructure and property industry experience. I’m addressing you today as a property expert, as a member of the local community and as the father of four children who attend school close to the proposal.

40 Today I will (1) highlight the number of the critical shortcomings of the Department’s assessment of this proposal. (2) I’ll bring to the IPC’s attention the recent research highlighting the damaging impacts plastic recycling is having on the environment and on the community. (3) Respectfully, I will request a four week extension to the written submissions. In the interests of time, I would refrain from citing references and leave that for my written submission.

45 And so to begin with the shortcomings of the Department’s assessment. The Department’s evaluation of the proposal against s 4.15 of the Act is inadequate in relation to the proposal’s impact, the public interest and in particularly the site suitability. The assessment report does not include adequate assessment of health risks and environmental impacts, which are critical issues. It is clear that the

proposal will restrict future employment generating development within the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, therefore it does not promote the orderly development of the land as required under the Act.

5 The traffic impact assessment has not adequately considered the cumulative impact of traffic volumes. It has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed development will not adversely impact the efficient operation of the roads and additionally not dust, noise, noise impact, taxpayer costs of rectifying truck damage to roads is not picked up and assessed at all.

10 There is no consideration of the health or economic impact on food production, on agricultural land surrounding the site. This land will become unusable and in fact dangerous for food production, as I'll explain later.

15 The operational model proposed by the applicant is not adequately assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed atypical mixing of plastic streams, which is not market best practice, and the control of micro, nanoplastic and forever chemical pollution. This is unacceptable considering the magnitude and risk and consequence, rigorous assessment is required. The assessment contains no detailed analysis of ESD principles as required under the Act.

20 I'll go on now to discuss recent research into the health risks. Notwithstanding the inadequacies of the Department's assessment, emerging research and science is highlighting the dangers associated with plastic recycling. Current planning controls and current operating standards may not adequately mitigate these risks. These risks associated with the release of harmful microchemicals being released from this facility. Recent research confirms that micro, nanoplastic and forever chemical pollution occurs in a number of ways. Firstly, air control units in smokestacks do not capture all micro and nanoplastics that escape via exhaust fumes. Our mate earlier confirmed that. The EIS is 5% leakage and GHD's suggestion for neighbours to stay indoors to avoid fumes is completely unacceptable.

25 Number 2, the subject site is flood impacts. Stormwater runoff will capture micro, nanoplastic and forever chemicals, carrying them downstream into the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly Rivers and ultimately into the Warragamba Dam. That's the major Sydney drinking water catchment.

30 (3) Wastewater from the site will contain thousands of tonnes of micro, nanoplastic and forever chemicals. The wastewater makes its way into treatment facilities where it is not appropriately contained.

35 (4) In the event of a fire, the location of the facility will ensure a health and environmental catastrophe. Many tens of thousands of tonnes of burnt micro, nanoplastic and forever chemicals will be released into the community, on to farmland and into drinking water. Recent research has confirmed that up to 13% of total plastic processed can be leaked via wastewater in similar facilities overseas, not including stormwater and in airborne gases. In this instance, 13% reflects over

15,000 tonnes of harmful chemicals per annum. Even if we applied 1% leakage, this would represent 1,200 tonnes per annum and 54,000 tonnes in this building's design life. This is clearly unacceptable.

5 Emerging research is linking these chemicals with health risks such as heart  
attack, stroke, infertility, disease and cancer. The subject site is not isolated but  
located adjacent to major residential communities, schools, retirement villages,  
nursing homes and food producing land. I stress again, the site sits on a flood plain  
10 that feeds downstream into a major Sydney drinking water catchment. Whilst the  
current planning regime may not factor in these risks, the risk and the liability are  
real.

To conclude, the Department's assessment lacks the degree of robustness and  
15 detailed assessment warranted by a proposal of this nature, magnitude and  
consequence. Quite simply, this is not the right site for this. This is not a case of  
NIMBYism. This type of facility should not be located in anyone's backyard.

Finally, to allow adequate time for expert review and preparation, we respectfully  
20 ask for a four week extension to the written submission deadline. Thank you for  
your time.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. We still haven't heard from Lynette Saville. Thank you.

25 **MS LYNETTE SAVILLE:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioners, and I  
thank you for the opportunity to address this important meeting this afternoon. My  
name is Lynette Saville. I was a registered nurse and worked in hospitals, acute  
care, occupational health and health promotion, education and now retired.

30 My grandparents lived in this area for many years. I've spent a lot of time and we  
now have a property in Mittagong. Firstly, I totally respect the excellent, diligent,  
rigorous process undertaken by Wingecarribee Shire Council to develop the  
Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct and their LEP. There was extensive  
research, community consultation undertaken and it was commendable, as are the  
objectives, aspirations and aims of their LEP, which much be upheld and  
35 respected, otherwise a dangerous precedent will be set for any council in New  
South Wales.

I urge the commissioners to act in the public interest and adopt the precautionary  
40 principle in this instance. The Plasrefine proposal is controversial, it's audacious  
and the community is distressed because it plans to build a hazardous facility in  
close proximity to residential areas, schools, childcare centres as well as rural  
lands, important food lands and it's also upslope of a riparian zone and  
watercourses, as others have said, that form part of Sydney's water supply.

45 Health and the environment are inextricably interlinked. The most fundamental  
principles in planning should be health and community. Integral is the health and  
wellbeing of children, today's and future generations. Children are extremely  
vulnerable to toxins, contaminants, pollutants and fume. The health and wellbeing

of the community, the pristine environment and ecosystems on which life depends are too precious. Our wildlife is already in decline nationally and needs protection. Protection of rural lands is a key for food security, food lands close to urban areas.

5 From extraction to manufacturing, the use and disposal of plastics impacts our health and the environment. Many chemicals, additives in plastic are carcinogenic, as we've heard from others, neurotoxic, cause asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease, other lung diseases, it's associated with endocrine disruption. Conservative estimates are that humans ingest the equivalent of a credit card in microplastics per week. Plastics have even been found in the placentas of newborn babies. The health implications are profound and deeply disturbing to everyone here. This community and the wider community deserve better. Prevention of disease is better than cure. Please reconsider.

15 Plastic product use and disposal generates harmful effects for human health and the environment. Plastics contain additives that can cause serious health problems and recycling releases these toxins into the local environment, threatening those working with the materials and those living nearby. In 2020, Turkey was the single largest recipient of plastic waste from Europe. Workers and residents were exposed to harmful chemicals when they inhaled toxic dust or fume emitted during the recycling process, threatening their right to health with risks of developing significant long-term health conditions including cancers and reproductive system harms.

25 Many years ago I worked in occupational health and I witnessed workers in a plastics factory in Sydney experiencing occupational asthma and skin irritation and they were wearing PPEs by the way. Any plastic fume can cause severe irritation to eyes, nose and lungs, can be long-term and irreversible. There are many scholarly journals to which the panel and government should refer to regarding microplastics and health effects.

30 The proposal is also upslope to riparian zones that feed into the river systems and Sydney's water supply. Plastic recycling is inefficient, expensive and hazardous and there's little demand at present or market for recycled plastic. While glass, it's very different with paper, glass and metals where there's a relatively high proportion reused, whereas there's very little reused for recycled plastic.

35 The question is why should such a proposal with so much risk proceed? Risks to health, critically ecologically sensitive areas, endangering wildlife, biodiversity locally and downstream. Is this facility going to accept waste not only from all over Australia – if it is to accept plastic waste from all over Australia, why isn't it being assessed nationally? 120,000 tonnes per week, 100 truck movements, it's just totally unacceptable for any community. Could the recycled material be stockpiled? If so, how much? Where is the legislation and what happens if Australia decides to import plastic from overseas?

40 In my opinion, there's a tendency for whiz bang projects suddenly to deal with climate change and the waste crisis to appear that we're doing something yet

smaller projects are sometimes better. Just think of where Broken Hill would be now if they'd had their own local renewable solar and wind generation. It's a prime example of how sometimes small is better.

5 This proposal is controversial, the issues include that it's intrusive, out of character with the area, visual amenity, noise, pollution, health effects, detriment to the environment and fire risk. In dispute is the location, the scale, the appropriateness and risk. Plasrefine should be at least a kilometre from any homes.

10 And the other issue of concern is the Australian Institute article written this year predicts that the amount of plastic consumed in Australia will double by 2050. Policies, action plans and covenants regarding waste have been ineffective in Australia. We need really effective plans and policies to phase out the use of plastics, including a plastics tax to begin to deal with the scale.

15 Microplastics are endemic in us, in our food supply. They've been found in 94% of the oysters globally and in the gastrointestinal tracts of 62% of fish in Australia. The plastic recycling facility in Adelaide caused significant environmental damage to the riparian zones downslope. It should be a warning to what could happen here.  
20 Plastic recycling legislation has been lax and ineffective.

Of concern for me also was that as a panacea, a tick in the box, that a community consultation committee be formed as part of this proposal. My issue is that why put all this on the community? They don't have the power or the capacity to  
25 monitor and to do what has to be done for such a facility. Another consideration for the Plasrefine proposal is the incineration.

Historically, waste incinerators often don't reach the required temperatures, 1,200 degrees centigrade to reduce or stop dioxins, 1,500 degrees centigrade for  
30 PFAS. They habitually underperform. So plastic waste incinerators release toxic air pollution associated with high risk cancers. So incineration in this instance may be worse than alternate solutions. So the only way to effectively reduce this pollution is to drastically reduce the production and consumptions.

35 The assessment and reports should've included extensive evidence about the health effects and risks involved and worthy of such a project, as other speakers have said. I'm also – I've said that, sorry. The precautionary principle must be adopted and public interest test.

40 Wingecarribee Council's rigorous plans and LEP must be upheld and respected. The health effects of the community, especially children, must be the priority of all decision making as well as the ecological systems, the riparian zones, wildlife, vegetation, our food lands and Sydney's water supply. I urge the community to reconsider and thank you.

45 **MR MILLS:** So we only have Fiona Mitchell, who has not appeared. If that's the case then we will draw today to a conclusion. That is the end of day 2 of the public meeting. The public meeting will in fact recommence online as indicated earlier

today at 10 am on Tuesday, 12 November. The online public meeting will be livestreamed via the Commission's website and also here at the Bowral Memorial Hall.

5 Thank you to everyone who has participated today in this important process. My fellow commissioners and myself have appreciated the input you've provided. It's not too late to have a say on this application. Already we have extended the time for submissions twice. It's now to 25 November. You will see that that was put up on the website in the last couple of days, that further extension. So do simply click  
10 on the "Make a submission" portal on our website or send us a submission via email or even post. In the interests of openness and transparency, we'll be making a full transcript of today's public meeting available on our website over the next few days.

15 At the time of determination, the Commission will publish its statements of reasons for decision, which will outline how the panel took the community's views into consideration as part of its decision making process. Finally, a very quick thank you to my fellow commissioners, Clare Sykes and Janett Milligan. And thank you for those watching, thank you for all of you who have attended in  
20 the room. Please enjoy the rest of your day.

**>THE MEETING CONCLUDED**