



MARK TREDINNICK

OBJECT

Submission ID: 217812

Organisation: N/A	Key issues: Social impacts, Visual impacts, design and landscaping, Land use compatibility (surrounding land uses), Other issues
Location: New South Wales 2576	
Attachment: Attached overleaf	

Submission date: 11/24/2024 7:54:52 PM

MARK TREDINNICK

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the IPC,

I have lived in the Southern Highlands for nearly twenty years. I've raised three children here, on the outskirts of Bowral along the Wingecarribee, not two kilometres from the site of the proposed plastic recycling plant. I sit to write this submission this afternoon (and I know it is my great privilege to do so), on the back deck of a house my father owns, at the feet of the Little Mountain (Mt Gibraltar), and the north-easterly air is sweet with acacia and spring grasses, and it thrills with cicada song and shrills with the voices of children in the pool across the road. I wonder, though, if I would as happily (or safely) sit outside, and if the parents of the children in the pool would trust the air, dusty with plastic particles, if the wind was in from the southwest, as it often is here, and if the proposed Plasrefine plant were pumping its emissions into that same November air three or four kilometres from here.

I am a poet, nature writer, essayist, and teacher and much of my work has concerned the making and conservation of liveable places. I care about this place very deeply, but no more than most people care about their own. I'm not interested in real estate values and status; I am concerned for the health and integrity of a place and all the communities of life and affection it sustains; I am concerned that this development will mar the aesthetic and environmental values that draw people to this region and sustain its wellbeing.

I don't suppose many communities would welcome too willingly a proposal for a plant such as this, likely to leach microplastics and other chemicals into the creeks and swamps and to emit particulate matter into the air they breathe. No one wants their rural community to smell like an industrial estate; no one wants their country idyll sullied by industrial plant, with its traffic and clangour and pollutants, even when the plant in question performs a function, the recycling of plastics, that most of us understand to be necessary for everyone's environmental wellbeing.

But this proposal twice rejected by council (first by the administrative council and recently and unanimously by a freshly elected council whose representatives had campaigned strongly against the plant); opposed by our State and Federal representatives, notwithstanding the party differences between them (Stephen Jones, Federal member for Whitlam (Labor); Wendy Tuckerman, State member for Goulburn (Liberal) and Judy Hannan, State member for Wollondilly, the adjacent electorate that includes Bowral (Independent)); and roundly rejected by a community whose economic health depends on tourism, leisure, wellness and events, wine-making and horse-training, bushwalking and birdwatching and rural charm, all of which are likely to be impaired by this plant (its aesthetics and emissions and the traffic and noise associated with a plant of this scale this proposal is so grossly and manifestly at odds with local community needs and defining social and environmental values, that the State Government's overruling of our local government's rejection of the proposal appears at best absurd, perhaps hasty or pragmatic (underplaying real community and scientific fears because the proposal would help a government achieve its environmental/ recycled plastic targets). Certainly, the government's support for the proposal seems ill-considered, dismissing as it does concerns such



as those I articulate here and those many others, including our State and Federal representatives have articulated.

(It seems possible, this country being what it is, with its ancient city-v-the-bush animosities and ideological wars, that the decision to run with a proposal set down in an area to which it is so manifestly ill-suited, contains an element of (perhaps unconscious) willful enmity. As if to punish the Wingecarribee Shire for its beauty and relatively intact ecologies; as if to insist that no one gets any exemptions from the sometimes dirty work entailed in cleaning up our environmental act. Or perhaps the State Government's support for this project may be one more episode in the nation's sorry history of governments damaging local communities dependent on tourism, by support for polluting and damaging industries: as in the Hunter Valley and the Great Barrier Reef, as Dr Lindsay Tuggle Sloan argues in her submission to the IPC, to which I allude more below.)

A weed, it is said, is a plant out of place. Nothing wrong with the plant; but out of place it interferes with the integrity of a local ecosystem, sometimes ruining it. The Plasrefine facility located close to houses and schools, healthy (enough) swamps and creeks where platypus and microbats, spoonbills and rails prosper, by the banks of the Wingecarribee, within close range of schools and suburban homes would fit the definition of a weed.

We need such plants; in their place they are not weeds. But they are not needed where they compromise the environment they invade. We all agree we need to get our plastic consumption under control. We need to use less and we need to put what we do use to second and third (and possibly fourth) uses. So recycling plants such as this are, unquestionably, needed. But we need them located where the risks they pose to human health and waterways and animal lives are less direct, or more containable, and where the downstream impacts noisome emissions, noise pollution, increased heavy traffic are not so inimical to the green, clean, rural character that not only defines a place but keeps it alive economically.

People live in the Highlands because its air is clean, because of its open fields and its forests, because of the horses in the fields and the platypus in the streams, the proximity of national parks and swimming holes, the cool climate rural vibe, and the old buildings, the connections, still alive here to the places and practices of first peoples, the Gundungurra, whose sacred lands these are. People visit the area in large numbers for the same reasons. People marry here and retreat here and retire here. The economies of these towns depend on those visits. This plant puts all that, to a greater or lesser degree, at risk.

So I write, along with my council and all my political representatives and many in my community, to oppose the Plasrefine refinery planned for a site in Moss Vale. In order to keep my submission tight, and because I've not put in the work that others in my community have to research the science and economics, and the physical and mental health implications of the proposal, I'd like to acknowledge and endorse, without repeating here, two other submissions. The points they make, I make, too.

The first submission I rely on and ask you to read as part of my own is that of the Moss Vale Matters group, authored by Dr Dianna Porter. Others will write submissions using those key points. Please read those objections, in their detail, as my own.

I also refer to the submission by Dr Lindsay Tuggle Sloan. Lindsay is a near neighbour, a fellow poet and ecological writer, and I have read her submission and endorse it fully. In fact, so thorough and considered is it, so extensively researched and exhaustively footnoted, I can't imagine how one could read Lindsay's elegant and readable submission and not draw the conclusion she does, that the Plasrefine project must be rejected on grounds almost identical to those the IPC used to reject the Hume Coal mine proposal in 2021.

In addition to what I've said already, and the many other points made by Lindsay and by the Moss Vale Matters group, let me add these points.



1. *It seems foolhardy to place a plant likely to leach microplastics and other chemicals so close by waterways that drain into the Wingecarribee, which feeds into the water the whole of Sydney drinks.*
2. *The risk of an extremely hot fire in the plant seems unacceptably high, given the proximity of the plant to dwellings and schools, the town of Moss Vale, neighbouring farms, and the proposed Southern Highlands Innovation Park. The Highlands are bushfire-prone, and our local fire-fighting resources are thin and few.*
3. *I concur with Dr Porter's conclusion that the presence of a polluting refinery in the campus of the innovation park (SHIP) will deter the biotech and agri-research enterprises the SHIP is intended to attract.*
4. *Lindsay Tuggle Sloan quotes scholarship establishing connections between the air and water emissions of just such plants as this and poor public health outcomes within a wide radius. For people with particular susceptibilities, in particular the elderly (over-represented in this community) and those with respiratory vulnerabilities, the gamble with the plant and its emissions is too big to take. For the many health risks associated with microplastics, I refer to the submissions of many local medical professionals: Dr Helen McKool, Dr Jaquiline Duc, Jane Etchell and Pip Reed. I see no evidence in the Plasrefine proposal of anything beyond a commitment to make a plan to do something about major health risks. That attitude suggests scant care, a want of responsibility, a sign of a corporate player that does not see itself as a citizen of a place, with much responsibility, beyond the constraints of laws (inadequate to date to deal with the risks of MPs) for the people and streams and air of the place that it purports to enter.*
5. *Like all such places, the Highlands is sacred ground, beloved of the people who were never asked if they ceded it. The Bong Bong Common, just across river from the site of the plant, is a burial ground and of deep significance, as of course such a place would be in any culture, to the Gundungurra. The area around what is now the Cecil Hoskins Reserve, also quite near the site of the proposed plastic refinery, was (and remains) important ceremonial ground. Though upriver of the plant, both sites would be affected by plastic dust in westerly and southwesterly winds. This does not seem a respectful treatment of the memory and extant dreaming of the dispossessed first peoples.*
6. *I share the alarm of Lindsay Tuggle Sloan and others at the claim by the proponents of the Plasrefine plant that people living near the site would be able to manage their exposure to air-quality impacts through minimising time outdoors. The claim is frightening in its sketchiness and disdain. Apart from its arrogance and naivety, it betrays no awareness (while at the same time admitting a pretty high degree of risk and serious level of air pollution) that this is an area people live in precisely so that they can maximise time outdoors.*
7. *In my poem Litany: and Elegy, I wrote our words are made of plastic now and end up in the sea. I had in mind the poverty, inhumanity and artifice of speech and thought that seems to characterize so much public debate and decision-making for instance, the falsity and insubstantiality of the words used by Plasrefine to address the justifiable fears for their health of people living in the communities downwind and downstream of the plant. But, of course, my metaphor has in mind actual plastics, too, the microplastics that are causing a catastrophe in our seas. One doesn't want that catastrophe enacted anywhere, in particular, so close to home, in our streams. And it seems rash, in the extreme, to support a project such as this that offers no guarantees it will control its emission of MPs and other contaminants, especially when we still know much less than we need to about the dangers of microplastics to all of us, to some health-compromised people in particular, and to our waterways and ecologies.*
8. *First, do no harm : the heart of the Hippocratic Oath medical practitioners take. A principle I apply as a writer and speaker and teacher, and an idea that I commend in my teaching. The point of that vow is not that we never risk doing some good if there is any risk of harm. Rather, one commits to be sure that, on balance, the possibility of good outweighs the probability of harm. If you run this test across this proposal, it seems clear that the harm outweighs the good. Let a site be found where the good the refinery hopes to do outweighs the harm it causes and the greater harm it may or a site where the harm can be diminished or better contained.*



First, do no harm : in particular to the health and wealth and integrity of the place where you would ask permission to do the good you promise to do for us all. This test is not met in this case.

9. *Platypus are under pressure, and we are at risk of losing them. We are blessed to have some doing well in waterways in and around Berrima and Moss Vale. The council has a grant to study and conserve them. This refinery proposal puts the platypus at serious risk. Another risk, manifestly, not worth taking.*

Please do reject this ill-considered proposal. It would damage the amenity of this special area, upon whose beauty and fresh air, clean water and wholeness and charm the local economies and ecologies depend. It also threatens human and more-than-merely-human health, through emissions into the air and waters. There is no plan to abate or manage those risks, nor viable guarantees to local communities that their lives, and the integrity of the place they love, will not be diminished in many ways by the presence of the plant and the somewhat glibly acknowledged risks to life and place if things go wrong.

With my thanks for your care and attention.

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