



**New South Wales Government**  
Independent Planning Commission

## **TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING**

MOSS VALE PLASTICS RECYCLING FACILITY (SSD-9409987)

### **PUBLIC MEETING -DAY 1**

**PANEL:**

ANDREW MILLS (CHAIR)  
CLARE SYKES  
JANETT MILLIGAN

**SPEAKERS:**

NANCY ZHENG  
SOPHIE MASON JONES  
MAYOR JESSE FITZPATRICK  
MICHAEL MCCABE  
SUSAN STANNARD  
CR ERIN FOLEY  
CR HEATHER CHAMPION  
CR RACHEL RUSSELL  
CR NICOLE SMITH  
NATHALIE SWAINSTON  
DAVID BAXTER  
TINA HEMMING  
URSULA O'DWYER  
WENDY TUCKERMAN MP  
SANDRA MOORE  
ANDREW PHILLIPS  
MARK GREGORY  
EVELYN GARNETT  
JASON GARNETT  
REECE PROUDFOOT

ANA RISTESKA  
ROSE FIGTREE  
JULIET ARKWRIGHT  
MEGAN MOORE  
DEBORAH MCLAUGHLIN  
BARRY ANSTEE  
VANESSA HARCOURT  
CATHRYN BENSLEY  
JENNIFER DEMKIN  
NAT DARE  
BEN SHEPHARD  
DENISE GORDON  
RORY MATTHEWS  
BRUCE MUMFORD  
KERRIE BARNETT  
ROMINA CAVALLO  
GABBY KENT  
SKYE POPE  
ALEXANDRA SPRINGETT  
THELMA JOHNSON  
SHARN CAMPBELL  
HEIDI FAGAN  
DAWN SCHUBERT  
BEV HORDERN  
GRAHAM HORDERN  
WADE DEVER  
CRAIG FELDICK  
JOHN SWAINSTON  
JILL COCKRAM  
ALDO GIACHERO  
NATALIE DONNAN  
ANNA PHILLIPS  
BRONWYN TREGENZA  
ANNE CUBBAN  
PIP FRECKLINGTON

DIANNA PORTER  
SUZI BRYANT  
GARTH PHILLIPS  
KYLIE ROBERTS-FROST  
MORGAN KERNOW  
DEREK WHITE  
LOUISE KEATS  
SHARAN KENNEDY  
LUKE FOX  
JANE AYLEN  
COLIN TYSON  
TAMARA FACER  
PETA PAGET

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

DATE: 9:00AM – 6:45PM  
MONDAY, 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024

**<THE MEETING COMMENCED**

5 **MR ANDREW MILLS:** Good morning and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission’s Public Meeting into the State Significant Development Application for the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. I’m speaking to you today from Gundungarra land and I’d like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet and pay my respects to the Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

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I’m Andrew Mills and I’m the Chair of this panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners, Clare Sykes and Janett Milligan. Panel members have made conflicts of interest disclosure and as the Chair of the Commission I have determined that the Panel can consider this application.

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[Audience calls out for more volume 00:24:40]

20 **MR MILLS:** A copy of that decision document is available on our website. We have a limited and specific role at the end of the 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 submissions and your oral submissions and any 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.

25

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

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The application has already been assessed by the department on our behalf. Many of you have already participated in the department’s process and we thank you for that participation.

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40 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 conditions we’re considering today. Today, we want to hear your response to the department’s assessment recommendations and recommended conditions.

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45 Even if your submission today objects to the application being approved of 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.

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5 Firstly, we will hear from the applicant. Then we will proceed to hear from all other listed speakers. At the conclusion of day three of the public meeting, we will hear from the Department and the applicant who will answer any questions or respond to any issues raised during the public meeting. While we will endeavour to stick to our proper schedule, this will be dependent on registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time.

10 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 the speaker has one minute remaining. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired.

15 To ensure that everyone receives their fair share of time, I will be enforcing time keeping rules. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. However, in the interest of fairness to all registered speakers, an extension may also not be made. If you have a copy of your speaker notes or anything in addition to support your presentation, it will be appreciated if you could provide it to a copy to the Commission.

20 Please note any information in your submission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement covers its approach to managing your information, and that is available on the Commission's website.

25 Exits from this venue, in case of emergency, are located at the right-hand side and the toilets are located outside in the foyer area.

So we will begin, and I would like Plasrefine Recycling representatives, Nancy Zheng and Sofie Mason-Jones and Rowena Cavallo to please come forward.

30 **MS NANCY ZHENG:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for attending today. I'm Nancy Zheng, the Managing Director of Plasrefine Recycling. I was born [unintelligible 00:29:10] after I complete my Bachelor's degree, I moved in Germany to complete my Master of Science. Once I was back in China, I worked as a Human Resources Manager at the [unintelligible 00:29:23] China. And I completed a Master of Economics from the University of China.

40 In 2016, my family immigrated to Australia. In 2018, my uncle told me that he was deeply troubled by the amount of recyclable material ended up in our landfills, especially plastic. And we founded Plasrefine Recycling in 2019. Over the past four years, we built numerous relationships within the local community. One such community members [unintelligible 00:30:05] appreciate those who have provided valuable suggestions to improve the project.

45 Over time, we have refined the project to minimise the impact on the environment as a local community. I encourage community members and politicians to thoroughly embrace the official documents published on the or IPC website rather than to rely on the other sources.

The assessment report expressed why the Department decided to recommend approval for our project. If the project is approved, we plan to surround the site with landscaping and trees. Our facility will be open for visits, complete with an education centre, research and development centre.

5

I believe you will be inspired by the advanced technology that Plasrefine will use. We understand the community's environmental concerns. And we look forward to becoming part of this community, earning social trust through our [unintelligible 00:31:22]. We are eager to collaborate with council, contributing positively to our local area [unintelligible 00:31:32]. Thank you.

10

**MS SOFIE MASON-JONES:** Good morning, Southern Highlands community and commissioners. New South Wales has a plastic problem. Since the start of this proposal in 2019–2020, plastic entering the New South Wales waste management system has grown from 760,000 tonnes to almost 900,000 tonnes today. Over this same period, the rate of plastics recycling in New South Wales has decreased from 19% to 14%. These most recent figures are from the EPA's New South Wales Plastics – The Way Forward draft for consultation, which was released last month.

15

The New South Wales Minister for Environment noted in parliament earlier this month, that over 60% of plastic waste ends up in landfill every year. There is a strong need to develop additional plastic recycling and reprocessing infrastructure in New South Wales. To provide the capacity and the technology to divert plastic waste from landfill, increase plastic recycling, and keep existing plastics in use in the economy.

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As we all know, plastic is used in everyday items because of its versatility. It's lightweight, it's durable, and it has low production costs. The EPA advise that acting on plastic waste is an important part of our work to transition New South Wales to a circular economy where we, in this order, avoid waste, reuse, repair and recycle resources where we can.

30

Next slide please. The proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling and Reprocessing Facility is an advanced manufacturing and research proposal that seeks to play an important role in supporting the response to New South Wales' plastic crisis. The proposal seeks approval for construction and operation of a recycling and reprocessing facility with the capacity to accept up to 120,000 tonnes of mixed plastic per annum.

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Delivery and export of feedstock product would occur between Monday to Friday only, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Not in the evening, not at night, and not on the weekends. Operation of the facility would occur within an enclosed building on a 24/7 basis subject to market demand. Details of the proposal are on the screen and include four main build elements and associated ancillary works.

40

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Next slide please. The proposal will provide a number of benefits to the local area and state of New South Wales, including contributing to the state's target of tripling plastic recycling by 2030, and supporting 200 jobs during construction and

140 jobs during operation.

Potential impacts have been minimised through design and operational features, avoidance of impacts and through construction and operational management plans.

5 The proposal is designed to ensure that operational air and noise emissions are well below the New South Wales government guidelines. The design of the proposal will be sympathetic to the existing rural residential surrounds and consistent with the strategic vision – consistent with the strategic vision for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park which sees the area transform into an industrial and employment generating precinct.

10 Extensive landscaping along all site boundaries will rehabilitate undeveloped areas into green corridors, which is not currently occurring with development in this precinct. These will provide a natural screen for the buildings and rejuvenate the native flora within the riparian corridors.

The proposal does not propose any development within the riparian corridors.

20 **MR MILLS:** I am going to interrupt you there. I understand that emotions run high throughout this community in relation to this, and that’s absolutely ...

I understand – I’m waiting for the microphone – thank you. I understand that emotions run high, and we will get to hear everyone throughout this give their submissions. One of the important things about the process that we have here is that everyone shows respect to each other. You won’t want to be interrupted or heckled during your talk, please pay the same courtesy to other speakers. Thank you. Please continue.

30 **MS MASON-JONES:** Thank you, Commissioner. When operating at full capacity, there would be a maximum of five trucks per hour from Monday to Friday between 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. This equates to a maximum of 50 trucks a day, that is a hundred movements.

35 A new public north-south road is proposed along the western boundary of the site, connecting with the recently constructed Braddon Road approved by council to the south, and Douglas-Collins Road to the north. This connection will enable all truck movements to occur via Douglas Road. In addition, the existing level crossing will be relocated at the proponent’s cost to make it safer for road users and improve connectivity to the industrial precinct.

40 The proposed haulage route is to the north of the site along Douglas Road and Berrima Road and does not propose the use of Lackey Road or Argyle Street. There will be no truck movements throughout the Moss Vale town centre and residential areas, and this includes Beaconsfield Road.

45 Next slide please. This slide shows the surrounding industrial developments that were operational prior to this proposal, as well as those that have since been approved and/or built since 2020. Similar types of industries such as recycling

facilities and advanced manufacturing are located in this precinct. The proposal is consistent with the type of developments that are already located or council has approved for construction in the precinct.

5 Council's report to their ordinary meeting this Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> of October refers to the site being at a residential interface on Braddon Road and that the proposal will create long-term land use complex. Recently, council's Local Planning Panel has approved a new industrial development on Red Fields Road 500 metres to the north of the site, to use the same haulage site on Douglas Road  
10 with 35 heavy vehicles in the a.m. peak hour for a concrete batching plant.

In contrast, Plasrefine has committed to a maximum of five heavy vehicles per hour. Plasrefine will use vehicles that are up to 19-metre semi-trailers. The approved development by council has approved 36-metre A-doubles and 26-metre  
15 B-doubles. Plasrefine will not use Lackey Road or travel through the Moss Vale town centre. Council's approval has approved use of that haulage route, Lackey Road and the Moss Vale town centre, for the concrete plant. And the concrete plant is some 8 metres higher than the proposed development on the Plasrefine site, which is capped at 15-and-a-half, and the concrete plant is 23.5.

20 Next slide please. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act sets out a number of matters for consideration for proponents to address, requiring the orderly and economic development of land. The development is a permissible use on land zoned and identified for industrial purposes, consistent with the E4  
25 General Industrial zoning objectives.

This industrial zone adjoins on the eastern, northern and western boundaries of the site other general industrial land. The site itself sits on the southern boundary of over 1,000 hectares of industrial zoned land. The land immediately joining the site  
30 to the south is zoned C4 Environmental Living and is owned by the proponent.

Under Section 2.10 of the Planning System State Environmental Planning Policy, development control plans do not apply to state significant development. Notwithstanding the project team has developed and considered a project to be  
35 generally consistent with the provisions of the Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor DCP.

The proposal is consistent with state and council strategies and plans, including the Wingecarribee Local Strategic Planning Statement and the draft Southern Highlands Innovation Park master plan, and Southern Highlands Destination Strategy, which encourages and promotes the SHIP as a unique opportunity for  
40 large-scale industrial development conveniently close to Sydney and a good distribution to most of the country.

45 The proposal does not sterilise land for future employment generating uses. It has demonstrated through a range of modelling and technical assessment work that the impacts of the project can either be avoided or managed and are not significant. In particular, the nearest sensitive receiver, the Australian Biomedical Resources



which shares the immediate eastern boundary to the proposal site, has not raised their objection to the project.

5 In addition, the proposal provides an appropriate transition between rural residential areas to the south and the broader SHIP through enclosing the building's operations, providing suitable visual mitigation through façade treatment and landscaping, and managing air quality, traffic and noise amenity impacts through design and operational considerations.

10 **MS ROMINA CAVALLO:** In considering the time, can we have a short extension?

**MR MILLS:** No.

15 **MS CAVALLO:** No?

**MR MILLS:** No. Sorry. You can have the opportunity at the end to come back with anything additional.

20 **MS CAVALLO:** Okay.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Our first speaker is Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick.

25 **MAYOR JESSE FITZPATRICK:** Good morning, everyone. I'd like to thank commissioners Mills, Sykes, Milligan for being here over three days. And thank you for allowing all voices to be heard. We appreciate how accommodating you have been through this process.

30 I'll begin by saying that in recent weeks, there has been significant discussion across the media and political circles about the disappointment felt by Wingecarribee residents regarding the recommendation of this proposal. Well, I reject the term 'disappointment'. We are far from disappointed. The community is disgusted, devastated and furious.

35 I haven't seen opposition to a project of this scale since the community united to defeat Hume Coal, a proposal that similarly threatened to devastate an area not too far away from this very site. With hundreds and hundreds of opposing submissions since the proposal's conception, there have been three attempts to change the application from this applicant, trying to fit in to the surrounding amenity. But  
40 there is no circumstance upon which this community will allow it to simply fit in. This is not and never will be the right location.

45 By some we have been touted as NIMBYs – that's 'not in my backyard' for anyone who didn't know. But I will ask this: how many concessions must we be expected to make to facilitate this unwanted proposal? I know there must be the cost the destruction of our strategic plans, the very plans the Department of Regional Planning just gave \$250,000 for us to undertake. We're also expected to take thousands of truck movements per year at the rate of 1 truck every 7 minutes

along our roads. Roads that will forever be decimated by this huge volume of traffic.

5 We are expected to take the unknown material harm to the environment from the operation of this facility. Harm to which we have little to no light shed on by the applicant to date. We are expected to take all this traffic, all this hazard, and this facility running 24/7 within 250 metres of homes and 90 metres of future homes.

10 And to top it all off, the absolute irony of this situation. We get tarred with the slogan of NIMBY, but we are the ones expected to have plastics trucked in from all other areas and other towns in New South Wales because they don't want the plastics in their backyards.

15 Over the next three days, you will hear from our professional officers, our councillors, and a large portion of our community. I hope you hear us loud and clear. Please do the right thing by us. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Michael McCabe.

20 **MR MICHAEL MCCABE:** Thank you, commissioners. Thank you, Mayor Fitzpatrick. Good morning to everyone. My name is Michael McCabe. I am the Director of Communities and Place at Wingecarribee Shire Council. Thank you for your time.

25 Council's goals include maximising the recovery of resources from the waste stream and to support circular economy initiatives that minimise both resource production and consumption. However, council opposes the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility application primarily based on the proposed location. The application is deficient in both strategic and site-specific merit. My colleague  
30 Susan Stannard will provide further detail on these points.

The proposed heavy industrial use of the site is inconsistent with the objectives of the adjoining C4 Environment Living Zone land located directly opposite the site on Braddon Road. These adjoining lots currently provide a low impact residential  
35 development in an area with special ecological, scientific and aesthetic values.

Three new lots enabling residential development are located only 90 metres southwest of a proposal – these were approved by a DA22/0811. A development application DA25/0454 received by council on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2024  
40 proposes a residential dwelling on one of these lots. Additionally, DA23/0359 which created a two-lot subdivision, was approved on 30 June 2023, and DA22/1037 which enabled alterations and additions to a residential dwelling plus a studio was completed with an occupancy certificate issued in December 2023.

45 These neighbouring residential properties – developments – being lodged and determined since the initial 2022 Plasrefine application, have not been profiled or considered by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure when preparing the State Significant Development Assessment Report, of which this

independent planning commission relies upon to make their determination.

5 The current proposed site access and heavy vehicle approach concentrates vehicles entering and exit activity on the southern frontage of Braddon Road, resulting in the current proposition having the greatest impact on the extremely close residential lots to the southwest. The current proposed site access and heavy vehicle approach exacerbates the issues of location, traffic impacts, safety, and environmental risks. There is a riparian area which traverses a western frontage and to a lesser extent to the northern boundary of the applicant's site.

10 It appears that infrastructure and engineering solutions to traverse a riparian area and to facilitate improved site access and heavy vehicle approach by utilising the northern boundary and to a lesser extent the western boundary of the proposed site, are not being proposed by the applicant. It is acknowledged that such solutions will incur greater cost to the applicant and may result in a private road within the northern frontage of the applicant's site. However, these should not be reasons as to why they are not proposed.

20 One of the key concerns raised by the community is the discharge of microplastics into the environment and the potential impact this will have. Council has consistently raised these concerns in previous submissions, and do not consider that the issue has been fully quantified, and therefore is unresolved.

25 Assessment of the environmental discharge of microplastics in the application and planning assessment has been centred on particulate matter health criteria only. There is no assessment of where the microplastic dust will settle and what the cumulative impact would be once it has settled across the community. Microplastics in the air would take the form of a fine particulate matter.

30 There is no clear quantification of the amount of microplastics anticipated to leave the site. This fine particulate matter will not remain airborne forever. There is no assessment or model of where this is predicted to settle. In the absence of clear data, council believes the application of some form of precautionary principle would be appropriate.

35 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**MR MILLS:** Susan Stannard. Thank you.

40 **MS SUSAN STANNARD:** Good morning, commissioners. My name is Susan Stannard. I'm the Acting Executive Manager of the Strategic Outcomes team at Wingecarribee Shire Council. As mentioned, one key objective of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 is to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land. The generally accepted process for doing so is through the assessment of both the strategic and site-specific merit of a proposal. A process council fully supports and consistently applies.

The Plasrefine proposal provides a masterclass in the crucial significance of

assessing both strategic and site-specific merit. Zoning is a blunt instrument. Just because a development could occur under a zone, it does not necessarily mean that it should.

5 The Southern Highlands Innovation Park – the SHIP – is a regionally significant long-term employment precinct of some 1,000 hectares of industrial zoned land. Through grant funding from the New South Wales Department of Regional Planning, a master plan and detailed governance strategy for the precinct were prepared and have been recently exhibited.

10 The proposed site is located within the southeastern area of the SHIP. An area nominated in the masterclass as a research, training and advanced manufacturing precinct. And it is already operating as such. To locate a proposal such as Plasrefine within the precinct would set a precedent which would significantly  
15 undermine the intent and ability of the master plan to facilitate the orderly and economic development of that land.

The site adjoins a residential community extending across some 90 hectares. In response to this juxtaposition, design criteria for the precinct emphasise more articulated built forms rather than traditional big-box designs. Due to the inherent  
20 nature of its internal operations, the proposed Plasrefine facility cannot reflect any of the design aspirations for this precinct. The only articulation to its bulk would be the proposed 22-metre exhaust stacks referenced in documents but not depicted in any illustrations.

25 As mentioned, only the 20-metre Braddon Road corridor separates the site from the northern edge of the adjoining extensive and well-established residential community. Based on an estimated average of 1 truck movement every 7 minutes, Bradden Road would carry over 90 trucks a day as they accelerate up the eastern  
30 side of the building and out onto Braddon Road as they leave the site.

Little attention has been given to the estimated additional 200 worker vehicle movements per day. The operational traffic master plan does not consider these movements. The assumption being they are considered in the work travel plan, a document which is advisory only. Nor would these traffic movements be restricted  
35 to Braddon Road, as they can be expected to also impact Beaconsfield Road, the main thoroughfare through the residential community to the south.

40 Planned precincts of the master plan were to also promote the orderly and economic use of the SHIP through enhanced traffic management within and across the entire SHIP, with higher traffic uses being proposed for precincts further west closer to the primary access roads. One key benefit of this arrangement would be the better management of the road and rail level crossing interface that traverses the SHIP.

45 These concerns have been raised consistently by council from the outset. Council has also consistently raised concerns about the discharge of microplastics and their potential impact on the environment. Council firmly believes that a full assessment

of the potential impact on human health, on local agriculture including livestock, crops and feed supplies, on food chains, on nearby land uses, on water catchments and water courses, on ecology and the local economy, remains outstanding.

5 The circular economy is not the only economy that matters to the Wingecarribee Shire. The visitor economy is also integral to the shire's economic wellbeing, an economy which relies on our environment and the quality of our produce. We have an obligation to our community to ensure that the decisions of today do not adversely impact present and future generations. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Councillor Erin Foley.

**CR ERIN FOLEY:** Not working. Okay. There we go. Thank you to the Commission for being here today in person. My name is Erin Foley and I'm a Wingecarribee Shire Councillor and Deputy Mayor.

15

The community is strongly and passionately opposed to the Plasrefine project, which is already having adverse social impacts even before it has been approved. Plasrefine is situated within the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct – or SHIP – designed by the council as an employment zone focused on innovation and sustainability, integrating low-rise buildings that harmonise with the natural landscape. However, Plasrefine's oversized industrial sheds along with its operating proposal fall short of every strategic goal of the SHIP.

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Plasrefine proposes to import plastic waste from across New South Wales and other states. This project is placing the environmental risks and social costs squarely on Wingecarribee while serving areas far removed from us, prioritising the State Government's needs above our own strategic vision for our future.

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Plastics recycling is a relatively new industry, with risks that are still being evaluated such as microplastics, air and water pollution, and damaging large-scale industrial fires. Consideration must be given to the immediate surrounding land use.

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A recent peer-reviewed scientific study concluded that there is a significant lack of understanding in recycling facilities' pollution potential, indicating that at this stage, we simply don't know enough about the impacts of plastics recycling. Progress must happen; however, progress needs to be balanced with the sensible and long-term perspective on benefits. A solution to New South Wales' plastics problem is urgently needed, but approving Plasrefine without consideration to the impacts of this project in this location is shortsighted.

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Even though the land is zoned for industry, zoning alone is insufficient justification. Zoning should serve as a guide, not as a blanket approval, relying on input from the local council as to what is the best interests of the community.

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Exercising caution now will pay off in avoiding irreversible intergenerational consequences. Proximity to residential areas presents a major concern with

Plasrefine. Nowhere in New South Wales has a plastics recycling plant been built so close to homes. Others like a 1,000 square metre facility in St Marys, or a 5,000 square metre facility in Narrabri, are located over a kilometre from the nearest houses. Unlike Plasrefine, neither are as large in size or located in a sensitive drinking water catchment area.

A plastics recycling facility in Albury processes 20,000 tonnes annually, while Plasrefine would manage six times that amount and much closer to residential areas. Around 200 metres compared to 1,500 metres of the Albury site. By this scale, Plasrefine should be ideally located 9 kilometres from homes, not 200 metres.

The only similarly scaled facility in Australia, a plant currently under construction in the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, has access to interstate railways and is in a strategic location at the intersection of critical transport links. It is also adjacent to established waste and logistics infrastructure. Similarly to the other plastics recycling plants, it is also at a distance of over a kilometre from homes.

These other facilities are much better located, and it gives rise to the question that even if Plasrefine is permissible in this location, should it really go ahead without a nuanced examination of the surrounding land use? A plastics recycling plant is a high-impact project on so many levels, and a review of other facilities across New South Wales easily reveals that there is more to consider when locating a plastics recycling plant than simply its zoning.

The site incompatibility, environmental and social impacts, and the lack of precedent for a project of this scale in close proximity to residential areas, shows that the proposed location of Plasrefine is fundamentally flawed. No amount of community consultation will convince this highly engaged and deeply affected community to accept a large-scale plastics recycling facility in the drinking water catchment area so close to their homes.

This community is already grappling with significant stress and discord; feelings that will only deepen if the plant proceeds, sterilising the future land use of the SHIP. This is not the place to test a trial-and-error approach, hoping to mitigate pollution concerns or manage social impacts somewhere down the track. Attempting to push forward with the current plan disregards the social value of the area and risks the health, safety and harmony of a community that deserves respect and a thoughtful, responsible planning approach from the State Government.

**MR MILLS:** Councillor Rachel Russell. I'm sorry. Heather Champion.

**CR HEATHER CHAMPION:** Yes. Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Commissioner, for the opportunity for us to speak with you directly. My name is Heather Champion and I'm the Greens Councillor for Wingecarribee Shire. Like many people here, I believe deeply in the importance of recycling as we tackle the plastics crisis and transition towards a circular economy. But we can't tackle one crisis by creating another one.

I am here to stand alongside our community by strongly objecting to the proposed location of the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. As it stands, the location of Plasrefine poses risks so serious that they cannot be ignored. It's simply not the right site. It's not the right site because of the possible environmental and health impacts of microplastics being released into wastewater.

This facility would be built on two riparian zones and within metres of waterways that flow directly into the Sydney and Goulburn drinking water catchments, impacting the drinking water of literally millions of people.

Even state-of-the-art facilities can fail. One in the UK was recently found to be leaking 13% of the facility's plastic material into local waterways. Plasrefine is so large that even a small percentage of material loss into wastewater could mean a huge impact. Our state's drinking water cannot be treated so lightly.

It's not the right site because instead of being located in a heavy industrial zone, it's unsafely located within 150 metres of residential properties, and there is no buffer zone protecting two schools and a childcare centre.

Plastics recycling facilities are notoriously vulnerable to fire. The industry peak body reports that there are 12,000 fires in recycling facilities in Australia every year. And the plastic burns as fast as if they were fuelled by propane. Our local firefighting capacity with only four tankers across the area, is not equipped to cope. And if we're relying on backup from Campbelltown, that's a 45-minute wait that homes and schools can't afford to wait.

Plasrefine Recycling is a company that has no history in Australia. It's not clear who the operators of the site will be, and it's not clear that they are appropriately qualified and experienced. It's also notable that the Environmental Impact Statement is still missing key information about how Plasrefine's 16,000 litres of wastewater will be managed.

The statement offers no data about the existing level of microplastics in the catchment, no assessment of possible environmental harms, no proposals for the type of technology to be used in processing the plastic, no proposed microplastic emissions limits, and no assessment at the point of discharge of whether our shire's water system can cope. We are being asked to trust that this process will be managed well. But on these key issues, we're being kept in the dark.

The risk of approving this operator to run this facility in this location are simply too high. There's a reason why facilities of this type are usually located a significant distance from homes and waterways. And the site that has been proposed is unacceptable in terms of the potential risk to biodiversity, residential safety and water safety.

Lastly, it's not the right site because the community who are the experts in this area have told us loud and clear that it's not. Over the next few days, you'll have

an opportunity to hear from more than 100 passionate locals who know this location, care deeply about the future of our area, and are vehemently opposed to the approval of the development in this form.

5 Panel, your agency says that community participation is used to inform determinations, and this is what community participations looks like.

I urge you to listen to their advice and refuse consent for Plasrefine. This is not the right site. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Rachel Russell.

**CR RACHEL RUSSELL:** As an assessment authority, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has failed in its duty of care to our community and failed to meet any benchmarks for commonsense. There has been no respect or demonstrable care for the quantum of stress placed on residents by recommending the approval of a hazardous industry at a site where there is no buffer zone from existing conflicting land uses. It is elemental. You don't risk poisoning where you drink. An ounce of prevention is worth an incalculable amount of cure.

Procedural fairness has been afforded to the proponent, but no procedural fairness or decency has been afforded to Wingecarribee Shire Council or the community in this recommendation for approval.

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The Premier has stated we should trust the process. How can we trust a process whereby a state authority such as the DPHI abrogates its assessment or responsibilities to post approval management and monitoring of conditions of consent by council? This is negligent and unfair.

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Wingecarribee Shire Council's submissions reference site-specific expertise stating, and I quote, "The proposed location is fundamentally inappropriate." The whole point of a State Significant Development is that the State Government accepts responsibility for ensuring boxes are ticked prior to approval recommendation. DPHI needs to refer to and respect the professional advice provided by Wingecarribee Shire Council if it is to ensure its assessment is sound and accurate.

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As will be evident from the submissions made to this public meeting, the mismanagement of this proposal by DPHI is undermining community trust in the government.

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As is, it is hard to determine what infrastructure issues the Department of Planning has satisfactorily assessed. For example, there is flawed evidence of the use of artificial intelligence in the recommendations. If we acknowledge desktop analysis fraught with issues, then combining that with the use of emerging AI technology in assessing matters that require careful, not careless, consideration, is of additional concern.

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In one example on page 27 of the DPHI Assessment Report, the submission summary states, “Wingecarribee Council identifies some substantial and positive changes to the proposed development advises the traffic route is reasonable.”

5 Which is a quote from the draft submission which was then overturned because it was based on a desktop analysis. And a completely different submission rejecting the route and viability of the site was provided post field survey.

10 No human could have made that error. The draft had ‘draft’ all over it. The site description at section 1.2.5 also has the Wingecarribee River flowing upstream into the reservoir. These inconsistencies are unprofessional, and in view of the responsibilities vested in the DPHI as an assessment authority, could be viewed as negligent. It justifies questioning the accuracy of the entire document.

15 I would like to see the DPHI take responsibility for the sloppiness of its work and develop a social impact management plan for itself. Part BD speaks to the need for measures to avoid, minimise and mitigate the development’s negative social impacts, including specific measures to minimise stress-related impact in how it executes its responsibilities. Walk the talk, State Government.

20 I’ve been working with a core group of about a dozen committed community volunteers in Moss Vale matters since 2021. When this recommendation arrived, one member was caring for her father who has cancer. Another’s mother had a stroke, and she had to fly interstate. One had COVID. Another had an operation due and was going to be supported by his wife, also a keen member. Another resident adjacent to the site has post-traumatic stress injury from this battle. And another was prepared to cater at Parliament House for the King.

30 I had only been sworn into council three days prior, and as a single parent had just moved house and was working full time. And we as volunteer community members were told we had no more than two weeks to digest all the paperwork, to prepare for the IPC, when the proponent and paid staff at GHD each time were given a minimum of 28 days, if not more, to respond.

35 The pressure was immense, and so seriously dangerous is this proposal that we have had no other choice but to take on unacceptable levels of stress and responsibility to inform the community. This is not the right site.

40 **MR MILLS:** Councillor Nicole Smith.

45 **CR NICOLE SMITH:** Thank you. Thank you, Rachel, and I must say very exciting to have our new councillors, and this being one of our first jobs. Yes, so I’m a new councillor, I’m also a long-term resident of the Southern Highlands. I’m a mother, I’ve been actively involved in the not-for-profit area in the community. I’m involved with agritourism and agribusiness and I care.

And you are about to hear over the next three days, we are a very quiet, gentle community. But as you can see, we’re a little bit unhappy about this one. The

thought that over a 130 generally very quiet peaceful people are willing to stand up here, says something about this issue.

5 So I want to say thank you. I also want to say you're going to hear from people wiser than me, more expert than me, and who can give you a great deal of detail. What I'd like to give you is two things: this is about legacy and this is about context.

10 The context of this, I am grateful to the Planning Commission for coming here, for coming to the site, for understanding our context, to hear thank you for coming and letting us have public meetings. I think when you go to the site, when you see this environment, you see how precious the Wingecarribee is, this is not about 'not-in-my-backyard'. This is about our state. This is about our water. This is about the air quality. And this is about the environment here.

15 I think that as new councillors, one of the things we've learnt is legacy. I grew up here. I chose to return to the Highlands to bring my children up here. My children go to a school that if the wind blows the wrong way, potentially microplastics will blow across their playground. I really think that we must – we are taught that in the public service, we must do things not for the short term, not for ourselves, but for generations to come. There are far too many questions around this.

20 This is not going to benefit the Highlands or the state economically. This is not going to benefit us socially. It is not going to benefit us, you know, environmentally. It is a problem. And I think that although this is a legacy of a zoning from many years ago with a council that was dysfunctional.

25 We have taken this, whilst in administration, council has taken state funding, State Government money, to develop the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct, which is a wise and sensible master plan. This development in this site – and we are not saying “not in the Highlands”, we are saying “not on this site”. It will potentially damage and affect the implementation of the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct. And it will potentially damage all manner of other things, including water, including air, including the ongoing and positive economic development of this area, let alone the health of our children.

30 Thank you so much for coming. Thank you to everyone for standing up. I really look forward to hearing what has to be said. But please, we need to consider the future of this place and this state. Please do not make a light-hearted tick-the-box decision. This is a very serious issue. Thank you.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, councillor. Our next speaker is Nathalie Swainston.

40 **MS NATHALIE SWAINSTON:** Thank you to the Panel Chair and the members of the panel for allowing me and so many of our community to speak here today. As you said, my name is Nathalie Swainston. I live in Moss Vale with my husband and our two young children, [Redacted].who attends the Southern Highlands Early Childhood Centre just 700 metres down the road from

this proposed facility.

I speak today wearing three hats. In my day job, I'm a management consultant who works with private, public and community sectors to improve outcomes for people in communities. I'm also a non-executive director on the Chair of Parents for Climate, who are Australia's leading advocacy organisation that believe our kids deserve to be safe at home, at school and at play now and into the future. And perhaps most importantly, as a parent in this community who cares deeply about the health and safety of my children and the future we're leaving them, all above else.

There is no denying that Australia and New South Wales has a plastics problem, and solutions to limit its impact on the environment and manage its use, reuse and safe disposal are critical. But there is also no denying that the dangers of plastics for the environment and human health is becoming clearer every day.

To be honest, I'm astounded that we are here today, with the State Government proposing to address its recycling challenges with a company that has no traffic record of safe plastics recycling and manufacturing in Australia, and in a location just a hundred metres from where people live, and a few hundred metres from where children live, learn and play.

Hundreds of studies have found that residents living near plastics recycling and manufacturing facilities have higher rates of respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases and some forms of cancer, compared to those living farther away. Many studies also demonstrate increased rates of adverse birth outcomes and that the children have higher rates of asthma and other respiratory conditions likely due to increased exposure to air pollutants such as the millions of kilos of microplastic dust emitted each year in recycling factories studied so far.

The precautionary principle is a key component in environmental and public health policy, which states that preventative action should be taken in the face of uncertain and potential risks. Given the risks and impacts from communities that have gone before us, have already been well-documented, it seems the precautionary principle here has been ignored.

You've already heard about the additional risk to water and the environmental contamination from some of our elected representatives this morning. And on this and the health risks I focused on, I would like to understand how the Department proposes to reconcile these conflicts?

The national EPBC Act, the Protection of the Environmental Operations Act in New south Wales – both these acts incorporate the precautionary principle, emphasising the need to prevent environmental damage when there are threats of serious damage or irreversible harm, even if full scientific certainty is lacking. However, when it comes to plastics manufacturing and recycling, the research is clear. Proximity is the poison.

My son and 45 of his little friends, along with their 16 wonderful young carers, play outside every day a light breeze's distance away from where this factory is proposed to be processing and producing known hazardous waste. This is quite simply an unacceptable risk.

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Since its proposal, the project including its proposed location has been met with strong and valid opposition from council, from the community, and our two closest state members from Goulburn and Wollondilly. Some of the many issues raised by these parties remain unresolved and yet here we are. How?

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Our children deserve to know that we will keep them safe based on the best evidence available, and not just do what is easy or convenient. Planning decisions are not abstract affairs. They may take place in rooms like this and in Parramatta and Macquarie Street, but they have consequences that reach far beyond these walls.

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This panel's decision will have a direct impact on the health of my children, their community and the environment in which we all work, live, learn and play. And I urge you to find a more remote home for this proposed facility. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. David Baxter.

**MR DAVID BAXTER:** Thank you for the opportunity to talk to me. I may sound like I'm a NIMBY at the start of this, but I probably am there. I am David Baxter and have lived in Moss Vale for 75 years, and for the past 54 years, just 150 metres from this proposed factory. My wife has lived in our home for 72 years. We have raised our families here, and our children have raised their families on our property.

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I leased the adjoining land that is now Plasrefine's 50 acres for about 30 years, and I know every inch of it. We love our home and the green pastures. As I spend the majority of my time outdoors, I will be subjected to the fallout of the micro and nano plastic particles. Not only myself and my family, but also the many visitors to my popular Moss Vale Museum.

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We have been advised by GHD that if it is windy, just to stay indoors. Great. It is always windy up here on the hill. Back in the early 2000s when I was training my harness racing horses onto my track, which is now on the Plasrefine land, my employee at the time and I were jogging our horses around on a beautiful morning with the sun coming up, and the whole of the proposed factory site was covered in a low fog that was gently lifting. Shirley said to me, "Where in the world would you get an office like this?" RIP Shirl. Yes, I'll never see that again. We'll forget those words. Those scenes will be gone forever if this project goes ahead.

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My two main concerns and worries though are the certainty of an uncontrollable, horrific plastic fire that will destroy people, animals, crops and waterways all over the Wingecarribee Shire, by the toxic smokes and the fumes. There are no fire units within the Wingecarribee that can contain a fire of that magnitude or arrive

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in time to save anyone or anything. The footprint of the building would only allow one or two units in to fight it. The factory fires in the cities have 50-plus fire units fighting them and still cannot control the fires. It is not a matter of if a fire will happen, it is a matter of when it would happen.

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The other concern is the viability and survival of the Garvan Mouse House, and the effects that the whole of the Plasrefine operation will have on their world-renowned and vital business. It has been proven how vibration has diminished the breeding cycle of these mice. I was asked when Garvan was being processed – proposed, sorry – if we objected to it being built? My reply was, “If one of those mice save a life, it would be worth it,” as that life could be mine. Garvan save lives. Plasrefine will take lives.

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A few years ago, we were all wary of asbestos and the dangers of it. Let’s not have a plastics facility on the town’s doorstep. It won’t be asbestosis as the danger anymore, it will be plasticosis that would be our next major killer. This is not the right site. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you, David. Tina Hemming.

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**MS TINA HEMMING:** Good morning and thank you, councillors. My name is Tina Hemming. I’m a business owner and resident of Moss Vale. My family have been in the area for over 40 years, and I would like to express my strongest possible opposition to the Plasrefine Plastics Reprocessing Facility which has been approved for Moss Vale.

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I am seriously anxious and deeply concerned about the following. The close proximity of the proposed facility to residential and farming land. The impact that this will have on the local environment. The potential health risks to our town and the wider Southern Highlands and Sydney regions. The impact of increased traffic volume from heavy vehicles. The potential to negatively impact tourism to the area and therefore weaken the local economy.

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Moss Vale is a picturesque town surrounded by farmland and home to a wide range of wildlife. Its beauty along with easy access to Sydney and Canberra has made it a popular destination and thriving and harmonious centre. It’s not the right site for a huge recycling facility supplied by hundreds of trucks daily carrying plastic waste.

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There is no buffer between this proposed heavy industrial development and the community. It’s only a 150 metres away from residential homes and an area shared by farmland where cattle graze. It’s 2 kilometres as the crow flies, or more to the point, as the wind blows, from Moss Vale Railway Station. The proximity increases the risk of exposure to the community to toxic chemicals and microplastics generated by the recycling process.

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Any accident or fire at the facility could have a catastrophic impact. Toxic forever chemicals potentially spilling into the ecosystem with devastating results. A

disaster from which the area may never recover. Our fire brigades are not equipped to respond to a chemical crisis of any magnitude. The nearest backup vehicles are 45 minutes away in Campbelltown – that’s 45 minutes too long when every second counts.

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Accidents aside, the proposed facility has the potential to emit harmful chemicals and microplastics into the surrounding air on a daily basis through its ventilation stacks and doors. The site is located near a waterway that flows into the Wingecarribee River. Rainwater runoff or accidents could impact the water supply to adjacent agricultural land and wildlife habitats. It’s important to note that the Wingecarribee River feeds into the water supply for Greater Metropolitan Sydney.

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Another issue of concern is the increase in heavy traffic. The volume of trucks and support vehicles travelling to and from this site will significantly impact traffic congestion along roads that are already struggling to cope at peak times. Not to mention the added air and noise pollution of around a hundred truck movements per day. Google Maps tells you that the fastest route from the south to the proposed site will take heavy vehicles through Sutton Forest and into Moss Vale via the Illawarra Highway past vineyards, residential homes and schools. This is not Okay.

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Plasrefine have promised to direct trucks via an alternate route, but who monitors and enforces these traffic restrictions? At a public meeting I attended last year, this question was raised. And apparently, it’s not the police, it’s not the council, and it’s not the RTA. So, who is it? Once this facility is opened, Plasrefine can take their trucks down any road they like.

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As a local business owner, I’m deeply concerned about the economic impact of this development. Damage to our fragile environment will undermine tourism, which our local economy relies on.

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My family has a retail business here and I can tell you definitively, that at least 50% of our business comes from visitors. Tourism supports many local businesses across the region and is a fundamental component of the local economy. Any negative impact such as toxic contamination, heavy vehicle traffic, and noise and air pollution will drive visitors away and damage our regional community.

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Please know, commissioners, that I am a hundred percent in favour of plastic recycling and reprocessing. There is an urgent need to increase our capacity to cope with the volume of plastic waste that we’re generating. However, there must be a more suitable location for the country’s largest plastic reprocessing plant. Similar facilities in regional areas such as Parkes and Albury have been developed in sympathy with the local communities, alongside buffer zones to ensure the health and safety of residents and the local environment.

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Respected IPC members, I implore you to overturn the decision made by the DPHI with the approval of this development. Moss Vale is not the right location for this project. It may be an easy solution to the plastics reprocessing shortfall, but it’s the

wrong decision, one that will do irreputable damage to a thriving regional community, the impact of which will send shockwaves through this region for many years to come.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Ursula O’Dwyer.

**MS URSULA O’DWYER:** Hi everyone. We on our way? There we go. Hi everyone, my name is Ursula O’Dwyer and I am here to speak as a concerned and afraid resident of Moss Vale and a new mum who has put down roots in our beautiful Southern Highlands town to raise our young family.

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We live less than 2 kilometres due east of the proposed Plasrefine site. And I, like so many others in this community, for the last four years have been gripped with worry, stress, fear that we would be in the position that we find ourselves in now. On the verge of this proposal being approved.

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This community’s outrage and objection is not a case of casual or generic NIMBYism. Our objections are multi-faceted, factual, and holistically they amount to the fact that the proposed site is totally inappropriate for this type of facility.

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An appropriate location for a proposal such as Plasrefine should have at least 2 kilometres of buffer zone between the site and the nearest residential home. The lack of a zone in this proposal is extremely concerning. The nearest resident less than 200 metres from the proposed site. The site is 30 metres from a medical research institute, the Garvan Institute, that breeds mice for medical research purposes which we all agree that we need. These mice cannot and should not be exposed to 24/7 vibrations, emissions of light, noise, air and other pollutants that will come from this facility. It’s also within 500 metres as the crow flies from a daycare centre, as you’ve heard, where individuals that are most vulnerable to toxins, chemicals, microplastics spend all day playing. Our children.

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In a 2023 study published in the Journal of Hazardous Material Advances, an international team of scientists sampled wastewater from a state-of-the-art recycling plant at an undisclosed location in the UK. The study found, as you’ve heard, that microplastics released into the wastewater from this plant amounted to be 13% of the total plastics that the plant was processing.

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The researchers estimated that this facility could be releasing up to 75 billion plastic particles in each cubic metre of wastewater. The study then suggests the recycling plant discharged up to 2,933 metric tonnes of microplastics a year before they introduced a filtration system. And then after, 1,366 metric tonnes. That’s still astronomical. A majority of these particles are smaller than 10 microns, which is the diameter of a human red blood cell. And 80% of these were smaller than 5 microns, making these absolutely environmentally relevant.

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This demonstrates that, even with state-of-the-art technologies Plasrefine states they will use, and filtration systems, plastic recycling plants globally are releasing

significant amounts of microplastics and the PFAS that is bonded to them, into the environment around them via wastewater and air emissions that they are not capable of capturing due to the size and scale of the microplastics.

5 In Appendix 1 of Plasrefine’s Social Impact Statement, Assessment, section 5.6, the language used in the proposal, it is understood that Plasrefine aims to treat its own wastewater makes it evident that there is no clear accountability or ownership end to end by to treat the wastewater and assure zero contamination.

10 They aim to try to filter the water after it’s been contaminated by washing, treating and heating of the plastics in the recycling process. This then allows the proponent to push accountability onto council and hopes – hopes – that the council’s water treatment plant will capture the rest. And spoiler alert, it can’t. The council has made this clear. It’s unacceptable to the council, as they’ve objected stating so, and stating clear water infrastructure gaps. And it’s totally unacceptable to the community.

15 Recycling facilities like Plasrefine should not be anywhere near water catchment areas, agricultural and viticultural lands, residential areas or schools. All of which this site is. It will have a huge detrimental impact on community’s health, our children’s and future generations’ health, on our economy, and on our environment and wildlife.

20 Amplifying effect of microplastic emissions on the site via wastewater is that there’s two riparian zones on the site. They feed directly into the Wingecarribee River which is a known platypus habitat, and they are threatened. And then that feeds into Warragamba Dam, as you’ve heard, Sydney and Wingecarribee’s drinking water. There is already public outrage about existing PFAS and microplastics in Warragamba Dam, costing multiple billions of dollars in associated remediation costs. A remediation effort that is still emerging and experimental, at best.

25 So, how can the New South Wales Government DPHI think it’s appropriate to create an even better PFAS microplastic problem by recommending the approval of this facility on this site? I am urging you, panel, to focus on prevention instead of further and uncertain remediation of an issue already causing health effects and public outrage. This is not the right site.

30 **MR MILLS:** Mrs Wendy Tuckerman MP.

35 **MRS WENDY TUCKERMAN MP:** Thank you, Commissioners, for allowing public meetings on this very serious topic and debate. Today you will see a significant public opposition to the Plasrefine proposal.

40 I want to touch on some of the key issues of the proposal. The unsuitability of the site for such a facility, given its proximity to residential areas, community facilities and the Australian Bioresources facilities is evident. The Southern Highlands Innovation Park was funded to the tune of \$270,000 by the New South



Wales Government. And that was to produce a guide for the planning of infrastructure and investment into the Highlands. If the government is spending \$270,000 on this plan, why aren't we paying attention to it?

5 The Plasrefine project on this site has never met the intent of the planning framework. Whilst the draft structure plan of the SHIP identifies heavy industrial users to the east of the precinct, with opportunities to implement more sustainable resources and waste processes – to implement more sustainable resource and waste processes, the proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility located just  
10 200 metres from the nearest home. In a precinct that the plan identified for productivity support, not general or heavy industrial.

From day one, this was not the right site. No other facility of this nature built in Australia is within a 1-kilometre buffer zone of residential areas. The proponent  
15 has also openly admitted that they have no prior experience when it comes to recycling plastics. [Redacted].

I note that in the Department of Planning's recommendation report that the applicant must not receive or process more than 120,000 tonnes per annum of mixed waste plastic. I have serious doubts and concerns regarding the monitoring of the feed waste that will be delivered to the location. And based on history of the environmental stewardship of the proponent, serious doubts whether  
20 environmental standards will be met.

We are told that there will be a hundred truck movements per day, 50 in, 50 out in a 24-hour period. Approximately 10 heavy vehicle movements per hour, and 280 light vehicle movements in a 24-hour period. The department advises that the development must not result in any vehicles queueing on the public road network, nor heavy vehicles and bins associated with the development are to be parked on  
30 local roads or footpaths in the vicinity of the site. I'm sure the panel are acutely aware that truck banking is common practice and with site plans indicating only one area allocated to truck parking, and with only one proposed access road in and out of the facility, the likelihood of truck banking or trucks using other local roads illegally, is extremely likelihood.

35 The impact to residents will be substantial. The Garvan Institute of Medical Research holds a site nearby. That facility is for breeding mice strains for Garvan researchers and partner institutes in Australian medical research. I'm informed that the mice embryos have recently been affected by vibrations related to road infrastructure construction, with road noise and vibrations killing the embryos. This is the only one-of-a-kind on the eastern seaboard. My discussion with Garvan would suggest that any approval would need stringent risk mitigation measures. However, again, my concern is around regulating that mitigation. At what stage is  
40 that risk too great?

45 While the document claims that microplastics risk can be managed, it acknowledges that there are currently no legislative requirements for the complete removal from wastewater, or information on how they will be managed. This

raises concerns along the long-term environmental and human health impacts of microplastics generated by the facility.

5 If you have not heard the expert advice regarding microplastics, you will be astounded by the threat they pose, particularly surrounding the electrostatic control of plastic particles and the absolute inability to manage these released into the environment. In recent rain events, there was high volume rapid water flow on the site. The Wingecarribee River Flood Study applies to this land. The western end of the site is Category 2 riparian land which, as stated previously, flows into the  
10 Sydney water catchment.

The department has acknowledged that negative social impacts would remain. These include changes to the character of the area, potential effects on residents' sense of place and wellbeing, and health risks stemming from stress and anxiety.  
15 These cannot be explained away with a social impact management plan, a community consultative committee, or community engagement plan. It suggests that community will have to rely heavily on the transparency of the proponent, of which there has been little to date.

20 The effectiveness of mitigation measures such as unseen management plans and promises of future actions to address potential impacts, all of which are assumed and hypothetical. Why has this information not been provided in the four years this project has been proposed?

25 I always thought good planning outcomes would require all information pertaining to the project to be transparent, present and real – not hypothetical or assumed. The community deserves answers and transparency in this process, and the information thus far provided falls way short of that expectation.

30 I am extremely disappointed that a planning department has presented a recommendation of approval on the proviso that plans are to be submitted after the fact. I implore the Independent Planning Panel to bring back the honesty and transparency in the process and return to a sense of justice and faith back into the planning process.

35 **MR MILLS:** Sandra Moore.

**MS SANDRA MOORE:** Thank you.

40 **MR MILLS:** Thank you.

**MS MOORE:** Good morning. Thank you, commissioners. My name is Sandra Moore. I've been a corporate accountant for 30 years. I work in development. Before that, I worked in the health system as a registered nurse.

45 Society has issues that need solving. We need to deal with plastics, to produce less, but failing that, recycle safely. My key concern with this proposal is informed decision making in addition to the health impacts, the proximity to housing, and

the credibility of the proponent. If a facility is required, it should be in a safer location.

5 Doctors are legally required to obtain consent. The fourth requirement being that consent must be informed. Our decision makers should be fully informed with all the facts. If we get it wrong, it'll be generational, it'll be deadly.

10 When I was nursing, I cared for patients with asbestosis, mesothelioma. I watched people die slowly and painfully. Have we learnt from the past? Arsenic in makeup, radium paint on watch dials, Thalidomide, lead in paint. All great ideas at the time, many deadly. Silicosis from Caesarstone. Cancers from PFAS. Corporations that are more focused on their bottom line. Dupont. James Hardie.

15 The Health Department's said, "We don't have any comments on this proposal." How can an informed decision be made with no commentary? Health problems are top of the list. More than 13,000 chemicals have been identified as associated with plastics. The list of chemicals of concern is long. Fallout from Chernobyl in 1986 was detected in Sweden, some 1,100 kilometres away.

20 I've been a local resident for over 18 years. My granddaughter lives approximately 900 metres from the site. Let's not wait for cancer clusters. Let's be proactive. Let's locate this essential service away from residential areas.

25 The EPA Act states that the community has a right to be informed about planning matters that affect it. But most of GHD reports commence with, "disclaims responsibility, scope limitations, recommendations based on assumptions, disclaims liability arising from any of the assumptions being incorrect, not independently verified, unverified information, errors, omissions." An SSD demands verified information without limitations.

30 Implausibly, Fire and Rescue New South Wales tell us that any toxic smoke would rise directly upwards. Do we live in a wind vacuum? When I incur a mistake – sorry, when I make a mistake, it may incur a penalty. When I was nursing, a mistake could cost a life. When you make your decision, it could cost many lives.

35 Are there alternatives that could be safer? Has the government considered the Cat-HTR process? Mr [Lieu(?) 01:45:01] is described as an early investor. He is not a director of Plasrefine, but the controlling shareholder. He has no affiliation with the local community. Where is he today? He has patented a disinfectant solution that includes 80% ethanol. Ethanol is a highly flammable and considered a volatile organic compound. Where are the studies on this solution? How will it be managed/stored?

40 Plasrefine will use processes that emit particulates and VOCs. What mechanisms will be in place if the machines fail, if the roller doors jamb? There are hundreds of toxic chemicals present in recycled plastic pellets. What about the 140 workers, their families, their exposure? We have space in Australia.

The department acknowledges it is difficult to accurately predict the nature and scale of social impacts. Is that good enough? Have you seen Erin Brockovich, Dark Waters? Once approval is in place, you can have a whole list of compliance rules. But what happens if they are breached? A slap on the wrist, a penalty?

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I want to tell my grandchildren that we made the best decisions, used the best practices, prioritised them as well as the environment and the future. We haven't in the past. We need development. We need smart urban planning. But we need to deal with plastic. Sometimes being a NIMBY is actually the correct call. Please consider that this may not be the correct site. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Andrew Phillips.

**MR ANDREW PHILLIPS:** No, that's all right. Well, what more can I say? Everybody's covered it so well, so I'm not going to dwell with that. I'm an expert in construction, fire safety, engineering. And I started my apprenticeship in 1960 as a carpenter, down the bottom, but I chose not to stay there.

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We are not during industrial revolution of the eighteenth century when people did whatever they wanted to do. This is totally different. We are going to poison the atmosphere and not be able to clean it up no matter what we do. What this stuff is going to bring out admits a building that is totally encapsulated. Totally in a way – no, what you're showing as an expert in construction and safety, is totally inadequate. It's not even 1%. It admits the area totally tanked, so no water can escape it. It needs to have airlocks so air cannot exchange, because you will cause a major disaster. This is not what I was going to speak on, but everybody's covered it well. So I'll stay with my expertise.

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Now, I'm 81 years old and I can tell you I've seen people come and go. But you can never undo a major disaster. The Wingecarribee area is very fragile. You've got everything here. There's all sorts of industry and it's all primary. We don't mind having secondary industry as long as it's done correctly. This is not done correctly.

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And if this government allows this to go through, it will be a blight on its record. Thank you very much. [Redacted].

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So, Commissioner, you've got a job to do the right thing. My children and grandchildren live here. My daughter's been living here for 22 years, that's why I moved here when I retired at Sydney Council. I've been here now for 11-and-a-half years. I came here because – I was going to move out of Sydney because I couldn't stand the smell of it. I don't want you to do the same thing.

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Let me tell you about asbestos. I row on the Parramatta River for Sydney Rowing Club. We'd get up past Clyde and we wouldn't dare put our finger in the water because the asbestos was floating on the water. This is worse. Because this is static electricity that comes out of plastics. And it will stick to your body.

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Now, I was a national champion in rowing, I'm not a wimp, I'm not scared of anything. But you are going to poison my atmosphere. And there's no way of cleaning it up. You have to really, if you are going to – and the other thing, you can't use the roads. There are railway lines there. Why use the roads? Our roads in the Wingecarribee are the worst roads I've ever encountered. They've only got 12 millimetres of bitumen on them. And you want to use our roads. You know, I've got a very [unintelligible 01:50:44] 1992 and I'm not game enough to put it on the road, because of the roads are so bad. One wheel is worth \$800. Now, you want to tell me to go out on them, and these trucks are going to damage the roads even worse. They're going to make them even worse.

Now, I've been at the CO about the road construction because I've done that, I've built roads, and I'll build whatever you want, high-rise buildings. They've got to be done right. You cannot build this facility the way it is down on plan. It is an abomination. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. We've actually come to the point at which we had planned the morning break, even though we're actually a little early. I want to take that break on the basis that there are speakers who are due not to speak for another over half an hour. So, we will take the standard break. We'll return – I'll get some timing here – we'll return in 20 minutes at 10:50.

Can I just make this observation? I said it at the beginning, but just a reminder. There's been a few people who've made comments about the proponent, the people who are proposing this development. I just want to remind people that the public meeting is for the commissioners to hear your thoughts on the merit of the application, not the applicant as such. We don't approve the applicant. We approve the application. Thank you for the respectful way in which you've been proceeding so far.

[unintelligible shouting from the audience 01:52:33]

I'm telling you what the law says. Okay. We have to abide by the law. So, we will take the 20-minute break and return at 10:50. Thank you.

### **SHORT BREAK**

**MR MILLS:** Good morning, thank you for resuming so promptly. The next speaker is Mark Gregory.

**MR MARK GREGORY:** Morning. My name is Mark Gregory. I live on Beaconsfield Road, Moss Vale. We moved to Moss Vale because of the rural and country vibe. The air is fresh and clean. We have climate change – summer, autumn, winter, spring. We have one set of traffic lights. Peak hour is between 8:45 and 9:15 a.m., between 2:45 and 3:15 p.m. We are a community with a lot who were born and bred here, but we're not country hicks.

All this started with a letter drop telling us the that the Department of Planning

was going to develop a – well, they weren't, but there had been a submission for a plastics recycling facility. What the hell? A plastics recycling facility in a rural suburbia 10 to 50 metres away from local residences, 300 metres from a childcare?

5 I didn't know what a SSD was. My understanding is an SSD is the fast-tracked application in bypassing LGAs. Why was a plastics recycling facility planned for a rural area? So, we formed an action group to combat this SSD. The community wasn't against plastics recycling, just against it being constructed on top of a riparian zone. Not the right site.

10 [Redacted].

The EIS. The community engagement sections were totally controlled by GHD. They were the community, they knew the community wasn't happy. The community were totally controlled by [unintelligible 02:15:29] by GHD. They even had security at our first engagement session. They knew the community wasn't happy. The community couldn't ask questions. Everyone was given Post-it notes to write down questions, which were stuck on whiteboards. People were agitated at not being able to ask questions. My wife was so traumatised, as were dozens of other people, about the lack of transparency of the first meeting. The night was a farce. [Redacted].

25 GHD had all the time to respond to community engagement sessions, but we the community were only given a couple weeks to formulate our responses. The second round of community engagement sessions, after the revised EIS, were held in the most remote and out-of-the-way villages in the Southern Highlands. What a farce.

30 Now, let's look at the facility. The size of three Bunnings warehouses. Amended application of the building, it has been said to be a maximum of 15.5 metres in height. This would no doubt be revised to 80 metres after an application for adjustment to plan. Developers do this all the time. I know from experiences, I've spoken to other developers, and if they want an adjustment, they just put in an adjustment to plan.

35 Built on a riparian zone. The site is landlocked. Next door to a high tech research facility. Inadequate fire-fighting system. Local fire service will not be able to cope with a major fire. Tenders will be needed to come from Sydney. Three-hundred and eighty vehicle movements a day. Nano-plastics are electrically charged and cling to everything. Westerly winds will blow the small particles of nano-plastics over the landscape, over the building, onto the roof, onto the gutters, and neighbouring buildings. Rain will wash this minute particles into water storage, only to be used by filter treatment process.

45 There's an excerpt from the Highlands Editorial, "Is the world entering a recycle plastic shortage? If so, why?" Over the past decade, the push for people and for companies to become more sustainable has been at the forefront of conversation. Recycle plastic waste has been the easiest opportunity for everyone to start

5 becoming more sustainable. This is why there is such a wide adoption and awareness of recycling plastics across the world. Supply-wise, there is a problem where PPE recycle plastics all over the world. They are running out of plastic material because people are throwing away fewer plastics. In other words, we could be facing a plastics recycling shortage.

Thank you. Not the right site. Thank you very much.

10 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Evelyn Garnett.

15 **MS EVELYN GARNETT:** Good morning. Good morning and thank you for giving us the opportunity to come and speak today. I live at [Redacted].with my husband Jason, he'll be speaking next. We have three children; two are here today, 12, 14 and 19. These two children are schools locally. I've brought them here today because this development directly affects my children.

20 Our home on Bulwer Road is 520 metres from the proposed plastics factory, according to Google Maps measurements. I will say this development is literally in our backyard. We've lived at our Moss Vale property for 10 years. I've lived in the Highlands for 18 years. We object to the biggest plastics recycling factory being built in Moss Vale.

25 We're concerned about air quality and the health of our family and our community. We do not want to breathe the air from this factory. I already suffer with asthma and allergies, as does one of my daughters, the type that wakes you at night. We don't want our water contaminated. We don't want our children to become sick. We don't want our animals to become sick. We do not want our wildlife to be trampled.

30 In Moss Vale, we value our heritage buildings, rolling hills, bushlands and native wildlife. This is a tourist, wine and hospitality region. Visitors come here to enjoy the region. It's not the right site for the biggest plastics recycling factory in Australia. There are no benefits to the community. The factory represents an unreasonable burden to the community and wildlife, and an unfair interference in our way of life, and risks to health and safety.

35 The Social Impact Statement was only prepared following significant community concerns. Half of the report does not contain any actual content but rather indexed material or explanations of definitions. It is not a robust report which was called for. It contains a number of nonsensical matters such as factory workers would be encouraged to ride their bicycles to work. Even though the factory would be operating 24/7, so presumably they'd be doing that in the night.

40 There's a community profile given. In summary, we are apparently an aging population, and we have lower-than-average socioeconomic indicators. We don't know what can be drawn from that profile, but I can indicate that my children – we're all aging, but my children are young, and I don't think we represent those

class of persons. I can see from the last 15 years of living in this area, the area has changed. There are a lot of families that have moved down from Sydney. It's not simply an aging population.

5 The Social Impact Statement acknowledges impacts are more significant for residents living within an 800-metre radius. That's our family. And as a receiver of the social impacts living only 15 metres away, I can see only negative impacts.

10 The mitigation suggested such as some additional trees that could be planted on our property, don't assist me. They don't assist me with the dust and the air quality. I'm not interested in employment from the factory. My children aren't going to be working there. We either work remotely or we drive to the office. I drive down to Wollongong three days a week and back, because I'd rather drive down there and live in a beautiful area than live amongst an inner city  
15 environment.

I'm not particularly concerned about the temporary potential negative impacts such as construction activity and visual impacts. I'm concerned about the air quality. Unfortunately, I don't believe the report that states there'll be virtually no opportunities for microplastics to escape from the buildings. I think that aspect of  
20 the report shows the extent to which the issue is not properly understood and dealt with. The reality is that microplastics will be emitted into the air. We are not reassured by any of the reports.

25 We say that the Bowral Hospital will not be able to deal with the extent of illness that we'll see in the Southern Highlands. As it is, people in the Southern Highlands often are required to go to Liverpool or Campbelltown if they have an actual significant ongoing illness. We hope that everyone is going to McHappy Day next month, because there will need to be a lot of Ronald McDonald Houses  
30 because people will need to travel to seek medical assistance elsewhere.

My brother and his wife and two nieces live in Sydney, and they also drink the water. We just have a reference to Horton Hears a Who! from Dr Seuss, which says, "We are here, we are here, we are here, we are here, we are here." This is not  
35 the right site.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Jason Garnett.

40 **MR JASON GARNETT:** Thank you. Morning everybody. I live at [Redacted].with my wife, Evelyn, who's just spoken. Our home on Bulwer Road is a few hundred metres from the proposed plastics factory, according to Google Maps. We've lived at our property for nearly 10 years.

45 We object to the biggest plastics recycling factory in Australia being built within a few hundred metres of our backyard. I work full time, I have a busy family, and I haven't had time to prepare properly for this talk today. I'm angry because for the last four years, my family, this community, have been put through hell while this development hangs over it. This really is the stuff of nightmares and it's literally



keeping me awake at night.

I faithfully followed the process. I've lodged submission after submission. I've participated in the engagement sessions. And I know that I'm not the only one who feels that this is a nightmare. Three-hundred and eighteen objections were submitted for the original application; only six were in favour. In the amended application, which was supposed to have addressed the community's concerns, the number of objections actually increased to 324, and the number of submissions in favour actually decreased to just 4.

The key issues raised in the public submissions were air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, suitability of the site, and fire risk. The assessment, I believe, is – not I believe, I know is fatally flawed. In the executive summary of the assessment, the department identifies the key issues as social, visual, and impacts on the Australian Biomedical Research facility next door, and operational traffic.

So, what's happened to the community's concerns? As I said, air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, suitability of the site, and fire risk. All of those concerns have been watered down and aggregated into a very long table of "Other issues". The department hired one consultant to deal with the social impacts. And it seems that the way the department wants to run this is that one consultant gets to basically decide what happens. Because that consultant has come in and said, "Right-o, all those other issues, we'll just deal with those with the putting on some conditions at the end of it." So, how can the department recommend approval when the developer hasn't even secured access to the site?

To address the risk of fire, the report says that "Well, the smoke will just go straight up." I mean, at least the lab rats will be safe. But what about the rest of us, you know?

And it's also stated in the report that it's a very windy site. Sorry, but it's commonsense that when it's windy, the smoke does not go straight up. It's not possible, it's not physically possible. In a nor-wester, which is not uncommon for the site, that smoke is going to straight into Moss Vale and over the – well, so over the water catchment area.

The assessment says there are three fire trucks available locally. Three fire trucks for a facility three times the size of a Bunnings Warehouse. The assessment says more trucks can come from Campbelltown and Wollongong, if needed. No one can guarantee that. First of all, Wollongong and Campbelltown are an hour away. And if those fire trucks are dealing with fires down in Campbelltown and Wollongong, they're not going to be coming.

To address the risk of microplastics on health, the Department of Health says that "The risk is thought to be low". Well, I'm not a lab rat. On the escape of microplastics and pollutants into the environment, the applicant has noted "There will be virtually no opportunities for microplastics to escape from the buildings as part of the process. All operations associated with the proposal would occur inside

buildings.” You don’t base your decision on what the developer says. They will say anything to get the proposal approved.

5 One of the stated objectives of the Environmental and Planning Assessment Act 1979 section 1.3 states that “The objective is to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land.” And yet the development will bring hundreds of truck movements per day from the highway, which is north, through the entire business precinct, past available and more suitable industrial lands, navigating three level crossings to reach a well-established residential/industrial interface, 10 that which the site adjoining residential properties. It doesn’t make sense. It is not orderly.

The development conflicts with our local council’s state-funded strategic framework for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park. The framework seeks to 15 foster an emerging biotechnology sub-precinct at that location. Those biotechnology facilities are very sensitive. Is that orderly? No. The strategic framework is state funded, and now the department is just going to ignore that and recommend the approval that is at odds with what the State Government has funded. How is that economic? 20

That’s just the beginning of it. As I said, I haven’t had time to prepare, I don’t even have five minutes. But yes, pretty angry.

25 **MR MILLS:** The next speaker is Reece Proudfoot.

**MR REECE PROUDFOOT:** Thank you. Ooh, there should be a slide. Thank you. My name is Reece Proudfoot. I’m a father of two young boys, a husband, and an active member of the Moss Vale and Southern Highlands community. We’ve 30 lived here for five years, and we moved here because of the strong community ties and connection to the natural environment.

There are a hundred speaking here this week, and thousands coming together across the Highlands to protect this place, speaks volumes. My day job at Regen Labs involves working and walking alongside regional communities just like ours, 35 and businesses around the country, to build resilience and economic vitality with social and environmental wellbeing. Prior to this, I spent 10 years at WWF Australia, a global ENGO, as Head of Innovation and Impact Investment, working on business model innovation that protects and builds resilience in regional communities, especially after the Black Summer Bushfires. 40

Regional communities like ours are a hot bed of innovation. And what we’re seeing proliferate all around the country are new innovative businesses that are building economic vitality for communities in response to the needs of that place, while often resulting in positive social and environmental impact. 45

These types of businesses are now part of a new economic model referred to by economists, academics, communities and businesses as the regenerative economy. Australia’s economy is already transitioning to a regenerative economy. We’re in

an economy that heals the future, rather than steals from the future like more extractive models.

5 Only two months ago, the Minister for Science and Innovation, the Honourable Ed Husic, released the Federal Government National Science Statement. This is a 10-year roadmap for the growth of our economy. The priorities are: transitioning to a net zero future; supporting healthy and thriving communities; elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems; protecting and restoring Australia's environment; building a secure and resilient nation.

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Plasrefine in its current model and place, either has very little impact on or goes against these Federal Government priorities. Regional communities are on the frontline of impacts, like increasing natural disasters due to climate change, economic challenges, and case in point, being a dumping ground for the nation's plastic waste. A problem did not create but are being made to deal. We shouldn't have to settle for businesses that might solve one problem but as a result, create many, many more negative impacts in the communities that they're in.

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20 There are better models. Next slide please. We've heard this morning, and no doubt for the next two days or the next week, the myriad of negative social and environmental impacts to our community and our region. For the sake of time, I'm not going to repeat through them all now. But it's clear that the model and location that Plasrefine is proposing will result in significant burden on this community.

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25 Health impacts through PFAS, microplastics, airborne pollution and traffic. Damage to our precious local and regional ecosystems, habitats, riparian zones. And an apparent complete disregard for any community feedback or participation. This is sometimes referred to as "extractive business model". It's extracting value from our community and region, resulting in [unintelligible 02:34:21] people, communities and the environment. This is going against the grain in terms of economic trends. Businesses like these are losing social licence to operate, and are being replaced by businesses that deliver positive impact to people and the environment.

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35 The good news is that the space where these two economic models intersect is ripe for innovation. And the Southern Highlands community is responding with the Southern Highlands Innovation Park or SHIP. This [unintelligible 02:34:46] with an opportunity to be leaders in regenerative business models and business model innovation, attracting the right kind of investment and the right kind of business that want to work with our community to deliver local economic, social and environmental benefits.

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45 These are the types of models that the community will get behind. Because the community has been involved in participants and beneficiaries. An example of this in practice is the Bega Regional Circularity Cooperative where the community has collaborated with business, in this case Bega Cheese or the Bega Group, and government on a nation-leading circularity hub that is delivering social, environmental and economic benefits to the region.

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As we can see from the turnout today and this week, our community cares deeply about our collective futures, and we want to participate. This business, while noble in its purpose, is not the right model, nor is it in the right place. With our state  
5 MPs offering to collaborate with the community and with business to find better places and better models, surely we should have an opportunity to do this, to go with the grain, to move with the times, and for the Southern Highlands to be a leader in regenerative economic development and not a laggard.

10 Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers recently said that, and I quote, “Healthy economies rely on healthy people and communities.” Please give us a chance for our community and our economy and our region to stay healthy and vibrant.  
Thank you.

15 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Ana Risteska.

**MS ANA RISTESKA:** ... and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I acknowledge the Gundungarra and Ngunawal people as the traditional  
20 custodians of this land we call the Wingecarribee Shire. I pay my respect to Elders both past, present and emerging.

My name is Ana Risteska, a Year 10 student from Moss Vale High School and Aurora College, a virtual selective college for rural and remote regions, a Harding  
25 Miller Scholarship recipient and an aspiring environmental engineer. I am a person who was born and grew up within 1 kilometre of the proposed Plasrefine site.

You probably think I am far too young to be here, talking to you about issues, regulations and legislation too complex for a young innocent mind to comprehend.  
30 There are far more competent and informed people here today that will talk to you about those very things. Instead, I will talk to you about what I know, what concerns me, my generation, and every following generation that will inhabit this land.

It has been fundamentally established that everyone deserves the basic human  
35 right to have a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Thankfully, I live in such a place where this is my reality. And I will fight for the ability of myself and future generations to continue to live in such a way.

The Plasrefine proposal puts this very basic human right at risk. Plasrefine’s  
40 purpose is a waste management facility, meaning the very products it will be dealing with contain some of the most highly toxic substances to our ecosystem’s health, microplastics and PFAS forever chemicals.

PFAS molecules consist of a chain of strongly linked carbon and fluorine atoms,  
45 and when they begin to break down, their long chain of compounds first break into smaller compounds. However, the smaller these fragments get, the more persistent they become towards further degradation – sorry, disintegration, meaning PFAS chemicals and microplastics take thousands of years to fully degrade.

PFAS together with microplastics are considered highly mobile, meaning they can easily be transported through an environment while also accumulating and bio-accumulating within organisms and ecosystems.

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PFAS and microplastics have been found to negatively impact animal and human development, their hormones, their reproductive systems, their immune systems, their metabolism, while significantly increasing the risk of many cancers and diseases.

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PFAS and microplastics also damage plant and health structure, their carbon and nitrogen metabolism, and most importantly, their ability to photosynthesise. So, why in the world does it sound like a good idea to expose such huge concentrations of such substances to the community of Moss Vale and the Southern Highlands? Plasrefine is set to be built 750 metres from a childcare centre, less than 5 kilometres away from 9 schools, 5 early childhood locations, 12 sport facilities and playgrounds, straight into the bloodstreams of thousands of young lives. That is where you'll find me, my sister, my mates, my basketball team, your kids, your grandkids, your fathers, your mothers, your communities.

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Unbelievably, Plasrefine advises us and our community when we faced with the risk of exposure to their pollution, which let's face it, is inevitable, to, and I quote, "Manage their exposure to the air quality impacts through minimising time spent outdoors." To put that into reality, I won't be able to go outside anymore. I won't be able to open my window. I won't be able to plant food in my garden. I won't be able to do anything outside my home without the constant risk of exposure to chemicals that will kill me.

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The thought of restricting communities from issues that you have the chance to prevent in the first place is implausible. Suggesting that we limit going outside of our own homes instead of not building Plasrefine in the first place, is a blatant disregard to our health and wellbeing. Facilities like Plasrefine do not need to be – do need to be established, sorry, and while I do not have a proposed alternative to Plasrefine's location, that is the job of the people that initiated this very development.

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Why would such a prosperous haven of nature, the very life blood of our community, and we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. So, put Plasrefine somewhere else, somewhere it won't poison us. Thank you.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Ana. Rose Figtree.

**MS ROSE FIGTREE:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rose Figtree. I've lived in the Highlands for 38 years now. But I stand here today as a very concerned grandmother. I've raised my children here, and I have grandchildren settled in Moss Vale very close to this proposed site. Where our security of a healthy living environment is being threatened by an industry that has

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many known dangers, which Ana very eloquently explained to us, as have many other speakers.

5 These known dangers associated with plastic recycling has huge gaps in technology that make recycling plastic more of a problem than a solution to the plastic waste that the world faces. I know we are just speaking against this proposal, this application, but a word must be said on the irony that so many people have been speaking against the recycling proposal here, and explaining all the dangers to our health, our air, our water, all the ecosystem that we live and  
10 we're fighting against. But it's not just about our backyard. There is no site suitable.

15 My limited research since waking up last week that this crazy proposal got through, I was delusional thinking it wouldn't make it past the gate. And I did some research and found numerous NGOs proving how toxic this industry is, that there's no way of containing it. Just go on and do some research beyond plastic number one, go there.

20 Why this recommendation has been made is beyond any comprehension. The recycling industry for plastics has been exposed to be useless and a toxic industry. These many international NGOs working very hard to bring awareness to the hazard of both plastic manufacture and plastic recycling are trying to educate and advocate to a world being poisoned by this industry. Where the level of plastic pollution, it's rising exponentially and outstrips any other form of environmental  
25 damage.

I'm a gardener now and a worm farmer and I'm trying to turn a tennis court into a food court, and since this has been brought to my attention, I focus on  
30 5-centimetre pieces of blue plastic twine that litter my acre property. They're everywhere. Where's this – it's being processed somewhere, put through like an industrial bread slicer, and it has found its way – I find it now in my worm castings. And I went, "Where is this coming from?" And it just highlights the hideous problem that we're all facing with plastic waste, and we have to go beyond plastic.

35 And it's not me that should be talking. Our regulators should be protecting us from this exponential rise in plastic. China is producing billions of tonnes of this garbage. We're importing it. There are no restrictions. And now we're all saying, "Oh, we're not against recycling plastic." Yes, I am. It's got to stop.

40 We've got to move consumption away from plastic to fully biodegradable products in a world that is ever – if the world is ever going to clean up this disaster. Plastic use has increased over 300% since the 1980s. Where's the screaming about not using this garbage? They took away our plastic bags at the shop and then put every item we buy wrapped in plastic. It's crazy.  
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It should not be up to us citizens here to explain the stupidity of this application that is threatening to destroy the high liveability index that many, everyone has

spoken about in this region, and that's also part of the Sydney water catchment. It's difficult to understand how the DHPI has decided to recommend it.

5 The water usage. The toxic waste. The quiet residential streets to be – it's just mindless. We're all aware of this problem of overuse of plastic today, and the health dangers associated with toxic leaching, microplastics entering the food chain and the human blood system. I know this isn't exactly about the application, but it's – we've got to face the big picture. And our regulator should have stopped this at the word go. It's nonsense.

10 The answer is not to recycle, as this only makes the problem worse. With second generation plastics from recycling, a proven fact that they can't even identify the toxicity of recycled plastics, and they're more toxic and just so dangerous. But there's – it just shouldn't happen. It's not the right site. Nowhere is the right site. 15 And we've got to grow up and get governments to make policies to make dramatic changes to the use of plastics in this world. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Rose. The next speaker is Juliet Arkwright.

20 **MS JULIET ARKWRIGHT:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Look, I thank the commissioners for giving me the opportunity to address them on this, the supremely important environmental and planning matter.

25 My name is Juliet Arkwright and I've lived in the Wingecarribee since 1993. Over the years, I've been involved in the public life of the shire and served as a Wingecarribee councillor from 2008 to 2016, and Mayor from 2012 to 2014.

30 Now, we all know that if Plasrefine is allowed to proceed, it'll be the biggest plastics recycling factory in Australia. Other speakers have spoken and will continue to speak of the myriad of concerns with this proposal. The fundamental one being that it is on the wrong site, and as Rose said, perhaps there should not be a site, full stop.

35 A major concern is that land use and transport interaction needs to be addressed. With the proposed heavy duty truck movement of a hundred to 200 trucks per day, the road systems are completely inadequate. The proponent's proposal to build a new road simply doesn't cut the mustard. Now, I've seen this in my life as a councillor, that too often commercial and residential developments are approved on the basis that infrastructure will follow. But too often this is not the case. 40 Maybe look at Ashbourne as a residential example.

45 The single longest, largest rather, age demographic in the Highlands at the moment is between 70 and 74, but we are also experiencing an influx of young families. What will be the impact of accident hazard potential, with the fatal mix of residential and overwhelming commercial traffic flow? To achieve satisfactory road infrastructure could cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Really. Who's going to pay for this? The council? I don't think so. After all, plenty of potholes at the moment. The State Government? I don't think so. And how about the

proponents? I think that is very, very doubtful, don't you? Yes. Good.

Safety issues are paramount, and this includes the water supply. As Councillor Russell said earlier this morning, "You do not poison where you drink."  
5 Wingecarribee and Goulburn water supplies could be affected by this. So could Sydney water, which in turn supplies millions of people. Therefore, this risk has strategic implications.

10 For years, the land near this proposal has been zoned Light Industrial. Successive councils envisaged clean light industry being developed there. Now finally, finally, the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct – SHIP as it is known – is proposed as the perfect solution. And I thoroughly supported a hub for high-tech innovative businesses to develop, most ideally situated between Sydney and Canberra. And this sort of hub and development is proving and has proved to be  
15 very successful in the United Kingdom.

This landmark development will be utterly destroyed should Plasrefine's proposals be approved. And as Rose Figtree has mentioned, the question has to be asked, "What is the use for recycled plastic when at the moment it is cheaper to make and  
20 use new plastics?" Academic and scientific debate in some circles suggest that recycling only encourages greater use of plastics.

Commissioners, I respect but I also lament that your findings will perforce be guided by legislation and government policy. But really, blind Freddy has to say  
25 that the ability of the proponents to deliver on such a proposal is very relevant to the success of this application. Therefore, the extent and size of the Plasrefine proposal combined with its providence of no proven track record in this country, could be said to be of justifiable geopolitical concern. And as such, I believe, and it is my own opinion, that this should be a matter also that needs to be brought to  
30 the attention of the Federal Government.

Thank you very much, commissioners, and I hope and trust that the facts will be allowed to speak for themselves. Thank you.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Megan Moore.

**MS MEGAN MOORE:** Thank you. I stand before you today as a concerned parent, educator and community member, passionate about this beautiful region I  
40 call home. In my 20 years living in the Southern Highlands, I have served on many committees and worked with various sporting associations across the Highlands, including Gumnut Preschool, the Bowral Blacks Rugby Club, the Moss Vale Dragonflies Netball Club, the Berrima Public School P&C, and the Oxley College P&F.

45 The reason for my community involvement in all stems from the desire to see connectedness in our community and to promote mental, physical and emotional health in our young people. Today, we find ourselves facing a mammoth development that threatens not only our environment, but also the quality of life



we cherish in the Highlands, and the health and wellbeing of our families.

5 My husband, a Moss Vale local, grew up in Beaconsfield Road, riding bikes and running around the streets with other kids in the neighbourhood. It was this rural life that we both wanted for our children, and thus the reason for us living here. While I appreciate we have a major issue with plastic waste and this must be disposed of somehow, I strongly object to the development of the Plasrefine Factory at the proposed site in Moss Vale, for so many reasons.

10 The infrastructure is inadequate. There are too many serious health concerns associated with plastic recycling. The size and scale of the development and the location only 150 metres from a residential area. It is simply not the right site.

15 Let's firstly look at the proposed location and its proximity to schools. There are nine educational institutions and five early childhood facilities within 5 kilometres of the site. The closest one a mere 750 metres down the road. A further 12 locations that are children's playgrounds or sporting grounds are within 4 kilometres of the site. Our children attending school or daycare or playing sport should not be subjected to air pollution as a result of microplastics being emitted from this facility.

20 Research shows that current and emerging technologies used to recycle plastic waste do not prevent these tiny plastic particles or microplastics from being produced. From my reading about production in plastic recycling facilities, it seems that filters used to prevent and limit this environmental contamination are not adequate and not a solution.

25 It is not in the public interest to have such a large plastic recycling plant in such proximity to all these educational institutions and amenities, where large numbers of children and parents assemble on a daily basis.

30 Another implication of this development is the increased traffic to the site and the heightened safety risk for our children travelling to and from these many schools. As parents, we encourage our children to walk or ride to school, if possible, but with the number of employees, contractors and trucks attending the site each day, there will be a significant increase in local traffic that will affect the safety of our children. And have you seen our roads? They are already crumbling under current usage. They cannot cope with increased congestion.

35 40 As a teacher at the local public school in Berrima, I see firsthand the vital role that nature plays in the development of our students. This outdoor connection is crucial for young people, as it supports cognitive development, enhances physical health, and promotes emotional wellbeing for our students. It is distressing to think that our own Southern Highlands backyards, the very places we want our children to immerse themselves in, could be harmful to their health.

45 The proposed Plasrefine site sits on two riparian zones, with water flowing directly into the Wingecarribee River. We often take our school students from

Berrima to explore the village and the river, as we encourage a deep appreciation for our local environment. Our students study the life of the platypus as an inhabitant of our local river.

5 The Australian Conservation Foundation has an ongoing protection project researching and understanding the behaviour of the platypus. Yet, this Plasrefine project will see microplastics being discharged into our waterways. This poses a great risk to the health of the ecosystem and the future life of the platypus in the Wingecarribee River.

10 I love seeing all the life in and around our river in Berrima. In the summer, there is rarely a parking spot to be found near the Oxley Street Reserve, as residents, young and old, swim, jump from rocks, and kayak in our river. The Berrima Weir on Berrima Road is also a popular place to be. This swimming spot is less than  
15 4 k's from the proposed site. Our waterways are vital for recreation, and we cannot allow a facility that threatens these spaces, to be established in our community.

Just in conclusion, I want to reiterate the insidious threat of microplastics. These  
20 tiny particles can infiltrate our environment and our bodies. Microplastics have been found in human organs and tissues, raising alarming questions about their impact on our health. This hazardous development is way too close to where we live, learn and play, and just not the right site. Thank you.

25 **MR MILLS:** Deborah McLaughlin.

**MS DEBORAH MCLAUGHLIN:** Hi, I'm Deborah McLaughlin, local producer and owner of The Honey Thief. I'd like to thank the IPC for the opportunity to speak today.

30 I reject the Plasrefine Recycling Project for a variety of reasons, which I'll include in my written submission. Today I'll speak on one. My family's kept bees in the Southern Highlands since we moved here in 2011. As the owner of a Southern  
35 Highlands based honey business, I'm aware that honeybees are highly susceptible to airborne contaminants. If the Plasrefine development is approved, our pollinators will be amongst the first to be impacted. The recycling of plastic is just greenwashing incineration.

40 Plasrefine's four stacks spewing carcinogens and neurotoxogens into our atmosphere will not just be detrimental to us, but to the local bee populations and the wildlife in this area. Bees are the world's most prolific pollinators and are the pillars of our food chain. They're responsible for the pollination of a third of our food crops, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries. That's one in every third mouthful.

45 Bees are highly susceptible to airborne contaminants for several reasons. Airborne pollutants can enter their respiratory system, potentially leading to respiratory distress. Bees are sensitive to various chemicals, including pesticides and heavy metals. These substances can disrupt the nervous system and impair their ability to

forage and navigate. When foraging, bees are exposed to contaminated pollen and nectar. This can lead to the accumulation of harmful substances in their body, affecting their health and the health of the hive.

5 Environmental stresses can weaken bees' immunity systems, marking them more vulnerable to diseases, parasites, namely the varroa destructor, which is now a major concern for Australia's honey industry. Airborne contaminants can affect the entire colony by reducing worker bee populations, impairing reproduction and leading to poor hive health. Efforts to reduce air pollution and providing them with  
10 access to clean water are important for protecting bee populations.

More trucks on our roads, microplastics in our air, PFAS exposure and the increased amount of CO2 in our atmosphere will not help with the Australian government target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030. This  
15 target is part of Australia's commitment under the Paris agreement. Additionally, the government aims for net zero emissions by 2050. These targets are intended to align with international efforts to combat climate change and promote sustainable practices. There is nothing sustainable about plastic recycling, especially if the plan is to manufacture plastics and introduce even more into our environment.  
20

Bees forage up to 6 km a day and our apiary is located on top of Mount Gibraltar. Bees are not our only pollinators. Birds also play a part in pollination and spreading seeds. On the weekend, I recorded a minute of the dawn birdsong on the Mount Gibraltar Reserve that adjoins my property. There are at least nine different  
25 species of bird in this recording. The honeyeater, superb wren, rosellas, king parrots, kookaburras, noisy miners and cockatoos can all be heard. Birds have a voice so we know they're there.

There are also the voiceless animals of native wildlife that live in the highlands on the precious little remaining wildlife corridors available to them. Wombats, wallabies, snake-necked turtles, eastern greys, possums and the vulnerable giant gliders and koalas and as Megan just mentioned, the platypus. They drink from our streams, breathe our air, dodge our vehicles. They have enough to contend with land clearing and loss of habitat and potentially now the added concern of  
30 highly mobile PFAS chemicals in their drinking water.  
35

The land of the proposed plastics recycling site may be zoned industrial but this is not an industrial area. It is a beautiful rural area and this is evident as soon as you visit the site of the proposed development. There is nothing sustainable about  
40 plastic recycling and building a plant in the Moss Vale area is the wrong location.

**MR MILLS:** Sorry, Deborah. One of the commissioners had a question.

**MS CLARE SYKES:** Thanks very much, Deborah, for your submission. I just  
45 had a question more around context of the proximity of the Mount Gibraltar Reserve to the proposed site.

**MS MCLAUGHLIN:** So the bees forage up to 6 km a day. We're probably

outside of that area but still the wind is an element and also the pollination, so affecting the plants with the pollen and the harvesting of the nectar within the vicinity, which will certainly fall within this area.

5 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

**MS MCLAUGHLIN:** Okay.

**MR MILLS:** Bary Anstee.

10

**MR BARRY ANSTEE:** Thank you, Commissioners, for allowing me to speak today. My name is Barry Anstee. I have a degree in architecture with honours from the University of New South Wales in 1972 and I've operated in the property development industry since then. Our family office is operated in Bowral and we have businesses in Mittagong, Moss Vale and Bowral as well and we have several properties throughout the areas and rural properties involved in beef cattle and in viticulture. We also own a property in Lytton Road, which is very close to this particular development.

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I have read all the documents that are on the state significant development major projects site and I've read the report by the Department of Planning and the proposed conditions of consent. I must admit for a period of time I was concerned because when I read the scoping report, the EIS and the report from the Department, it all said that the development is permissible with consent. Now, that's not quite correct. In fact, it's wrong. I've given you copies of the land use table, which if you look at permissible with consent, you will see that there is nothing that is permissible of a waste and recycling management facility. There is any other development specified in items 2 or 4.

25

30

Now, the question mark comes that what is proposed is an innominate use in planning speak. Now, when you come to an innominate use in planning speak, there is a requirement that you then go through the prohibited development and decide and give a report as to whether any of the prohibited uses would attach to the facility you're proposing. That hasn't been done by either the applicant or by the Department. Now, subsequent to when you go and look at the prohibited development, you'll see that there's a development called heavy industrial storage establishments.

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Now, when you go to that, the definition of that, it has certain definitions. So I did a bit of investigation in relation to heavy industrial storage establishments and behind the pages I've just given you, you'll find that there's a decision by the Chief Justice of the Land and Environment Court, Preston, where he has reviewed a decision by a commissioner. And what he's done when you read this report, he lays out particularly what has to be done by an applicant for an innominate use and he's quite clear that in assessing an innominate use, the applicant and anybody assessing it has to provide details of why the development is not prohibited by one of the prohibited uses.

45

Now, I've looked at the uses and what he said and how you apply those particular parameters to this particular Plasrefine site and what I find is that it is a heavy industrial storage establishment. Therefore it's a prohibited development. Now, as a prohibited development we then come to the situation that it's a jurisdictional issue. So and a jurisdictional issue which this panel has not been provided any information whatsoever on. You've been totally misled.

Now, I encountered this situation 50 years ago in [unintelligible 03:08:37] Council, a similar thing where I stood in front of an audience similar to this where nobody had raised this point and there the decision was made to refer the matter to the Supreme Court for a declaration as to the permissibility. There's a number of things that are wrong with the report in relation to various issues in this thing, in the planning speak, that does not give you power to approve this development or even deal with this development. I'll put those in a written submission.

My suggestion is that you need to between now and the next panel meeting, read this court case, decide what is the actual issue, if it is prohibited development, then stop wasting the time of this community, declare that it is prohibited development, as I say that it is, but there's greater minds than mine. But I've had a lot of experience in the Land and Environment Court, I've given you a judgment by the Chief Justice, I think you're bound by your role to assess what I've said is a jurisdictional issue and deal with the jurisdictional issue immediately.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Vanessa Harcourt.

**MS VANESSA HARCOURT:** Hello. Okay, we're on. I'm a resident living just 400 metres from the proposed site. My family and I chose the location a decade ago. We're relying on the Council and the LEP for providing an adequate buffer zone between residential and industrial issues. Unfortunately, because this is a state significant development, those protections do not apply.

We recognise that our region is evolving. The Southern Highlands is home to one of the largest industrial zoned areas in the country. However, it is essential that we adhere to the strategic vision outlined in the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, which has been developed with community input. This emphasised the importance of green space, walking paths, bike tracks, encouraging really interesting architecture, focusing on the sensitive landscape and the environment to attract innovative businesses, to enhance the quality of life in our region.

Disregarding this collaborative effort would break the trust established within the community. Regrettably, during Professor Ryan's of the social impact, the SHIP was not considered, resulting in a significant oversight in the community's concerns. The opposition to this development is overwhelming and is evident.

My family has recently subdivided our property into three 5 acre lots, investing in the construction of Braddon Road to support these residential lots. However, the proposed Plasrefine facility plans to utilise the road, transporting plastic waste, leading to truck movements entering and leaving every seven minutes. This influx

of industrial traffic threatens the safety of our local roads, pedestrians and livestock. Moreover, we're in the proximity of the Garvan Institute, which conducts sensitive mice breeding program. During the construction of our roads, vibrations inadvertently harms the embryos. If Plasrefine proceeds, I worry about the potential disruption of this critical operation which could have catastrophic consequences.

The development application for our new home at the end of Braddon Road has been submitted with public exhibition come and gone. This home will be only 150 metres from the site, a fact that I'd highlighted in my formal submission yet it has not been addressed by GHD. I have two daughters, nine and 13. They are country kids, they ride ponies, catch yabbies – this is the bit that was going to catch me. They play in the dams and the paddocks. For half of their childhood, we've been fighting this proposal. GHD's mitigation measures include stay indoors. I worry for the safety of my children in a company we simply do not trust.

Can we drink our tank water? Will my dams be poisoned? Will the unknown chemicals coming from the plastics harm my children? What if the bloody thing catches on fire?

Plasrefine has blatant disregard for my family and the community. Their planning has been fraught with errors, including a proposal for trucks through school zones, single lane country roads. The community consultation has been limited and our voice has often been silenced. The site's weather conditions and topography have been neglected in the planning process. We're nestled in a valley that quite often experiences fog until midday, with emissions from the trucks, microplastics and exhaust from the factory would become trapped under a blanket of fog and severely affecting the air quality.

After heavy rain and natural streams through the valley, the natural streams running through the valley into the low lying Plasrefine site, if you press play, this is after heavy rain running through the Plasrefine site into the Wingecarribee River and Sydney's drinking catchment. Additionally, gale force winds and westerly winds whip through the valley straight into Plasrefine's fast action rolling doors, with microplastics carrying into the watercourse.

Plastic recycling is an emerging industry with many unknowns related to microplastics and other chemicals. We cannot gamble with the health of our community and waterways. In conclusion, while the land may be zoned for industrial use, it's not fit for purpose. It sits on riparian land and poses significant access challenges for emergency services, far too close to residents and inadequate size for such a large oversized facility. As you consider the development, I urge you to reflect on our community motto, "Not the right site." Thank you for your consideration.

**MR MILLS:** Our next speaker is Nat Dare. Nat not here? Is Cathryn Bensley here?

**MS CATHRYN BENSLEY:** Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. First of all, who am I? I'm Cathryn Bensley and I'm a local resident in the area here. While I do not profess to be an expert in this world, I do come here today with 10 years' experience in the plastic manufacturing industry here in Australia, including the use of recycled plastics as a raw ingredient. My role was to advise and educate stakeholders in major developments such as hospitals, gaols, education campuses, regarding the use of Australian made plastics in their plans.

The concern I wish to highlight today is the escape of microplastics from the proposed facility due to poor building design. Firstly, what is the microplastic? There are three examples on the screen here. The powdered form, flake and pellets. Powder is the product that I have experience with. Think table salt but much, much larger in weight and due to its electrostatic properties, it sticks to everything. If you get some in one hand and try and brush it off with the other, now you have it in two hands. Flick your hair off your face and now it's in your hair as well.

The analogy that I like to use to describe the stickiness of it is The Cat in the Hat Comes Back, where the red spot that starts off very small in the beginning eventually covers the entire environment. Now, the cat actually had a secret weapon under his hat, which when unleashed managed to turn the environment pristine again. We do not have such a tool, so we must stop the microplastics entering the environment before they increase harm.

Studies are revealing that PFAS chemicals and viruses can adhere to the microplastics in the environment. PFAS will be present in this proposed facility, at least by arriving in plastic bottles that contain such things as sunscreen, shampoos, moisturisers and will be washed out in the cleaning process. Next screen, please.

This is the top shot is the five year wind rose for Moss Vale, taken from the site, the weather station just to the east of the plant. Every local here today can attest to the ferocity of our westerly winds, chasing washing that's been stripped from lines no matter how many pegs are used. People living in the Highlands I know don't realise this and certainly before I moved here, I assumed the worst of the weather would come from the south.

The building design, there's some elevations there straight off the documents, show three huge roller doors on the west facing side of the building. These doors are described as fast moving but how fast is that? I couldn't find any detail. So I timed my own garage door. It's a new door, faster than the last one. Seventeen seconds up and 20 seconds down.

These proposed doors are three times the height of my door and about 7 metres in width as well, so let's call it 50 seconds up and 60 seconds down. But these doors will also need to stay open for the huge trucks to reverse in, so that could take maybe another two minutes, I don't know, there's no information. Total time around four metres to open and close. Times 50 trucks a day in times 50 trucks a day out. I come to a total of about six and a half hours a day that these doors will

be open in the receiving area to face these winds.

5 The next photo, please. These are world class leading recycling sites. In the receiving docks, you can see the loose plastic on the floor. I invite you to consider when these are faced open to 60, 70, even 100 km winds that we so regularly get. Where will these particles go? To the east, Moss Vale weather station, Kelly's Creek catchment, which is catchment for Warragamba, Wingecarribee River and a reservoir in the upper reaches of the Nepean River. So two drinking sources for the largest city in Australia will be polluted along with the water for the Southern Highlands community and Goulburn. Really how many people in New South Wales do you want to poison?

10 What's not to the east is the particulate monitoring station. The nearest is Bargo to the north and Goulburn to the southwest. It's not going to be looking at the particles that are flying straight out of the plant. Taking into account the strong westerly winds combined with terrible building design, a large escape of microplastics is inevitable. The only conclusion that can be drawn is this is not the right site and this is not the right building design.

20 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Jennifer Demkin.

**MS JENNIFER DEMKIN:** Hello. My name is Jenny. I'm a pensioner and I'm a Moss Vale resident of 37 years. This is not just about my backyard, this is about every Australian backyard.

25 Wingecarribee Shire Council have been steadfast in their rejection of this proposed development for four years. Wingecarribee Shire is a water catchment area, runoff water feeds into Warragamba Dam which supplies millions of homes and businesses with water. Plasrefine poses a threat of pollution to that water. Our local waterways support native flora and fauna, including a breeding [paddle(?) 03:22:26] of platypus in Berrima, which are monitored and studied.

30 Plasrefine will use a vast amount of water which could at times mean water restriction for residents. Plastics need to be cleaned prior to recycling. Where and how would used water be cleaned and deployed? What's the guarantee against pollution into our waterways?

35 Amount of energy, probably electricity used to power Plasrefine, what's their plans towards self-powering? Excessive power use could cause outages to residents. Large machinery used to turn plastics to powder, chips or resins, causing noise pollution, vibration and unpleasant odours. The proposed buffer zone around Plasrefine is far too small, too close, far too close to residential areas, schools and preschools.

40 We are a high wind area. Plastic is electrostatic. It eventually sticks after flying through the air via roller doors being opened, trucks coming and going, and I'm talking 50 large trucks, heavy vehicles. This eventually will stick to our plants, to our bodies, to our gardens, to every single thing in its pathway. There are no roads



in the Wingecarribee fit to take this sort of heavy vehicle traffic. Whichever way Plasrefine trucks travel, they have to pass through a residential area on residential roads which are currently in a serious state of repair. If I drive my Suzuki into a pothole, I might need a crane to get it out.

5

Wingecarribee is already experiencing massive problems with congestion in traffic. These heavy vehicles should not go anywhere near a residential area. How will Plasrefine recycle 250 tonnes of plastic a year? Let's say they work a five day week, totalling approximately 260 days a year, that means that every working day they have to recycle 961 tonnes. These numbers don't seem attainable. Will this be a 24/7 business?

10

Wingecarribee Council has been planning and developing Southern Highlands Innovation Park, a 1,053 hectares of industrial zoned land between Moss Vale and Berrima, used to attract sustainable and innovative businesses and industry. I've lost my place. It will be an economic driver for the Wingecarribee region. The federal government has supported this with a financial investment. This Plasrefine will put this project in jeopardy with possible cessation of interested businesses.

15

Investigation should be made into the historical zoning of this proposed land. Older residents have assured me that in the 1920s, this land was used for market gardens. Somehow it became large industrial. Residential buildings commenced in this area in the first half of the last century. Please recheck this. This should've been rezoned residential god knows how many years ago. Can the IPC show us an example of a plastics recycling facility doing the same plastics processing in the same type of environment [unintelligible 03:26:36] areas and in a water catchment area? My guess, there is none.

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Plastics are petroleum derivatives plus other chemicals. When broken down, they are still petroleum derivatives and chemicals, maybe in a changed format. The risk taken in the building and operating of Plasrefine, far, far too high. It's too high for this proposal to even be considered. I'm shocked it's even in front of you. Nothing is worth the risk of human health and lives and our environment. I am a massive recycler. I do not expect my neighbours to pay for my recycling with their health and their lives. Please, IPC, let this be the fifteenth application that you reject. I beg you, I implore you. Thank you for listening.

30

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Ben Shephard. Ben Shephard? Bruce Mumford? Bruce Mumford? We are running early. That's all right. There'll be an opportunity for people to come back. I'm not going to exclude anyone. Chris Makeig? We might take a – so I might just double check, has Nat Dare arrived? We might take a 10 minute break, allow people to take a breather, comfort stop. We will resume at 12.18. Let's call it 12.20.

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### **SHORT BREAK**

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, everyone. Thank you, everyone. Thank you. Can you hear me down the back? Okay. Finally. Needed to do something. Thank you,

everyone. Thanks for your patience. I understand Nat Dare is here.

5 **MS NAT DARE:** Okay. I probably don't need it that close. I'm very loud myself. Thank you. I feel like I need to get up on the next stage, I'm more of a big stage  
girl, not this down low. So thank you and welcome back after lunch, thank you for  
10 having me. Sorry I didn't bring any wine. My name's Natalie and I currently work  
at Centennial Vineyard in Bowral, which is just about 3 ks from where we are  
now. Three hundred acres we currently have up there, we've been a winery up  
there for 26 years, before that it was a dairy farm. So we've got a big region here  
15 of agriculture and that's what I'm here to speak to you about and I had to print it  
on A3 because I forgot my glasses.

So I stand before you today as a concerned local business and tourism advocate. I  
15 currently work just 3 km away on a 300 acre property, Centennial Vineyards,  
growing some of the region's best grapes to create some of New South Wales'  
most award winning wines. I'm here to voice my opposition to the proposed  
recycling plant in our beloved Southern Highlands.

20 This decision will alter the very essence of our community, jeopardising its natural  
beauty, economic prosperity and the quality of the life we live as residents. Our  
region is renowned for breathtaking bushlands, flowing rivers and amazing  
waterfalls, not to mention our thriving agricultural industry, which includes many  
cool climate vineyards. These assets are some of the lifeblood of our economy,  
25 attracting tourists from far and wide that come to experience the tranquillity and  
unspoiled beauty of our surroundings.

The proposed recycling plant, with its unsightly infrastructure and potential for  
noise and odour pollution will undoubtedly tarnish this idyllic image and disrupt  
30 the peace that we cherish. Are you sure you want to do that? Furthermore, the  
plant poses a significant threat to our agricultural sector. The proximity to other  
farms and waterways raises concerns about potential contamination of our food  
supply and water resources.

35 At Centennial, we have now spent the last few years trying to become less  
impactful to the environment as possible. We have installed solar panels to run our  
winery, restaurant, farm and home. We use our own water supply and we have  
engaged a soil expert to help transform our land to ensure we're giving back what  
we take. With many businesses doing the best for their environment, it feels like a  
40 slap in the face when you allow such an unknown business to establish itself, with  
the ramifications known only later. What we don't want is an Erin Brockovich  
moment in the Southern Highlands. She was a good actor too.

45 The economic impact of this decision cannot be ignored. While the plant may  
create a few short term jobs, it undoubtedly will deter tourists and businesses from  
our region. Our thriving tourism industry which supports countless local  
enterprises will suffer as visitors seek out destinations with pristine environments  
and uncompromised natural beauty. Moreover, the proposed location of the  
recycling plant is fundamentally incompatible with the character of our

community. We are a region that values sustainability, environmental stewardship and a high quality of life. This industrial facility will disrupt the carefully cultivated harmony, creating an unwelcome intrusion in our peaceful existence.

5 I urge you to reconsider this ill-conceived proposal. Let us not sacrifice the long-term wellbeing of our community for shortsighted gains. Let us protect our natural heritage, safeguard our agricultural industry and preserve the quality of life that makes our Southern Highlands a truly special place. The future of our region rests in your hands. Please reject this recycling plant and choose a path that  
10 prioritises the preservation of our environment, economy and prosperity and our people's happiness.

And I'm not sure who advised on the land to buy for this development but maybe they need to be assessed because it's not definitely not the right place. No one, I  
15 don't think, is against recycling. I'm the garbage watch person at work and we all need to do our best but I think maybe some other place is better. And I don't want to be a NIMBY because I'm not a NIMBY but I grew up in Port Kembla, so it makes a little bit more sense in an industrial area. Thank you for your time. Thank  
20 you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Natalie. Is Ben Shephard available?

**MR BEN SHEPHARD:** Imagine arriving to the Southern Highlands. You've never been here before. You turn off the highway around Berrima and you marvel  
25 at the stunningly beautiful rolling hills, the cows, the horses. Imagine you drive down the road towards Moss Vale, excited at the trip to countryside, anticipating visiting restaurants, wineries, even a bushwalk. Now, imagine the disappointment of being greeted with the image of a four storey industrial building the size of three Bunnings, spewing smoke out of its oversized chimneys.

30 Imagine the regret and fear a visitor would feel about their decision to visit the Highlands. Is the air safe? Is the water safe? Imagine going back to tell your friends about the recycling centre and that's the image of the region you have burnt into your memory. Imagine they don't come back. Now, imagine you're a  
35 small business owner, like myself. Perhaps you own a bakery wine bar. And these visitors don't come back. Imagine you have to sack your staff. Imagine you're one of these 28 staff that I employ. Perhaps you could apply for one of the jobs at the local plastics recycling facility. But there's more people looking for work than  
40 jobs created.

Imagine that this recycling plant contaminates the air and the water supply. You might think that the risks are mitigated but so did those that approved asbestos,  
45 tobacco, silicosis, lead paint and thalidomide. Imagine you grow grapes and make wine in this region. You're told that the water's safe but people start falling ill, dying, and it's linked to contaminated grapes and you were told it was safe. ‘

Imagine that three people sat in a hall listening to the logical considered arguments of those that have concerns and decided that it still should be approved

and then went away to their homes, away from the repercussions of their decision. Imagine that this panel approved the recycling plant, where it is, and then we discovered that it does pollute and it does affect us in ways that we never understood, resulting in health issues and fatalities.

5

Now, imagine yourselves in 20 years' time telling your grandkids of your career and your achievements. You probably don't mention Moss Vale or Plasrefine. That's your secret, that's your shame, that's your guilt that you live with. And after all the perspective that you've been provided over the two days plus whatever's been presented in written form, if you still decide that it's the right site, imagine this moment where you could've made the right decision.

10

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Is Bruce Mumford available? Chris Makeig? Are any of the speakers who are otherwise scheduled for after lunch available? Okay. Just starting at the front if you want to come forward, are you ready to come forward? Thank you. What's your name?

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**MS DENISE GORDON:** Denise Gordon.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Got you, 37, thank you.

**MS GORDON:** Thank you.

25

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Denise.

**MS GORDON:** No problem. Thank you for coming today and listening to us. The purpose of my submission is to pose two questions but first I'd like to express how I'm feeling. Like most people here, I'm angry, I'm frightened but the most overwhelming feeling I have is one of immense betrayal. I've always felt that the government and the rules and regulations that they have in place, whilst sometimes frustrating, are there to keep us safe. I thought that we had bodies and organisations in Australia, unlike many third world countries, which monitor the dangers to our health, including what we breathe in.

30

The evidence about plastic recycling factories being detrimental to human health and the environment is there on public record for all of us to see and it's indisputable in its volume and accuracy due to the massive amount of research that has been carried out. An extraordinary volume of studies have been done. Therefore it seems almost criminal and certainly unforgivable that this one, the largest plastics factory in Australia by almost double the current largest, I might add, should be built in this location. That the process of approval has got to this point has made me lose complete faith in government and their system of regulations.

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So now allow me to set up my first question. You've heard the name Erin Brockovich, it's been mentioned a few times this morning. She was here in New South Wales last week to lend her weight to the largest class action there has ever been in Australia. 40,000 people suing the government because they live and work

on land contaminated by the chemical compound PFAS. That forever chemical. Not only is their health affected but they are unable to sell their homes and move away from the very environment that is poisoning them. This will cost the government millions in compensation.

5

So if this factory goes ahead in its current location, then when we are breathing in the carcinogenic fumes from four 22 metre high smokestacks, when our gardens are covered in microplastics and anything we grow to eat is compromised, when the tourists stop coming and the jobs are lost and we can't sell our homes, when the cancer rates increase, the infertility and autism numbers become infinitely higher than that of a healthy population, when lung diseases become commonplace, then the compensation lawyers will start circling and the class action I've just described will look like small fry at the side of the Southern Highlands class action.

15

Over the next two days or probably – thank you – already you've heard all about the health cost to the community, you'll hear about the cost to the water supply that will affect greater Sydney, you'll hear about the cost to flora and fauna and the wonderful agricultural industries that flourish here. But what about the financial cost of the litigation that will be brought to bear? Because tests will be done a year or so down the track and the suing will start. The costs, as shown in the Brockovich case, will run into the hundreds of millions, if not billions. So my question is this, will this factory and its ridiculously stupid location be worth the massive future costs to the government and the taxpayers? That's my first question and I'll leave it there for consideration.

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25

My second question to you requires more of a heartfelt response. I'm going to read an extract from an article, the link to which is on this paper which I'll hand in later. In inverted commas, "Scientific studies have found that localised air pollution and the release of toxins during plastic shredding and melting pose risks to human health. These include exposure to fine particles, dioxins, volatile organic compounds and other harmful chemical additives in plastics and they've been linked to asthma, respiratory illnesses, cancer and reproduction system harms." You all know that already. You've heard it a thousand times.

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35

Keeping that fresh in your mind, I live around 300 metres, as the crow flies, from this proposed factory. I'll be directly looking at the four 22 metre high smokestacks and the carcinogens they'll be emitting 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm going to be quite lonely because I won't be letting my children and future grandchildren come to visit and by the way, children are particularly in danger from the toxic dust and fumes emitted from these factories, as are the elderly. I've got relatives and friends that come to visit me now but I won't feel comfortable inviting them into my toxic environment.

40

45

So my question is to you, if this goes ahead, will you come and sit with me for a few hours on my front porch? I'll pick you some raspberries from my microplastic coated garden, we can drink water from the Wingecarribee River, where the wastewater from the factory is going to flow, but mostly we can just sit and

5 breathe in the polluted air from those smokestacks. You'll be taking those deep toxic breaths for a couple of hours. But I'll be breathing it in 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the rest of my life. How about it? Will you come and visit me? Because the thing is if you say no to me, then how in good conscience can you say yes to Plasrefine?

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. I saw another hand go up. That's all right. Thank you. Rory Matthews.

10 **MR RORY MATTHEWS:** Great. Thank you. First of all, thanks to the IPC for the opportunity to allow residents to actually put forward their case. A lot has been said about the environment, about traffic, about the visual impact to the area and the fact that it's not the right site. I'm going to just focus on one aspect of this from an engineering background and that is a fire and I have three slides to support this.

15 I think if you look at what's been happening around the world and how once these recycling sites catch fire, that they're almost impossible to put out because they generate their own fuel, being a petroleum product. So I'm going to give two or three visuals, looking at the site, the size of the footprint of the site and although the site meets fire regulations in terms of its design, why the design is actually flawed and if the site actually catches fire, it'll almost be impossible to put out. So I do have a couple of slides, if I can go to the next one, please.

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25 So this is just a visual of some of the – around the world some visuals of plastic refining sites that have caught fire. It's not so much the top ones in Wales, the one in Richmond, Indiana I'll be drilling into in the next slide because I think that's important. But sorry, if you can just go back to the previous one. I think what's important here is look at the firefighting equipment that is used on these. The distance that you have to be from the fire is significant for you to be able to get an angle of trajectory where you can actually focus on putting the fire out. And when we go to my last slide, which is actually a layout of where the plant is, you will see why this is important.

30 The distance that you have to be from the fire is significant for you to be able to get an angle of trajectory where you can actually focus on putting the fire out. And when we go to my last slide, which is actually a layout of where the plant is, you will see why this is important.

35 So these visuals are more for look at the style of firefighting equipment that's been used. Richmond, Indiana is fairly recent, that was last year. Two thousand people living within half a mile of the facility were forced to evacuate. Understandably and I know those who know about this fire know that it was more toxic, it had more chemicals than what is envisaged to be had in the site is Moss Vale, but nonetheless 2,000 people were evacuated. That's 2 km distance, so that's between – as the crow flies, between the centre of Moss Vale and the facility, those people were evacuated until the fire actually burnt itself out.

40 – as the crow flies, between the centre of Moss Vale and the facility, those people were evacuated until the fire actually burnt itself out.

45 Now, that little picture right next to the text with all the black smoke, what I did is did some chair research and said, well what site is about the same size as Plasrefine? And this one actually matches it quite well. So if you can go to the next slide, please. Thanks. If you see there I've got a little red ring around the fire engine, that's the same kind of fire engine that we have locally in the Southern

Highlands. There you can see it's sitting next to this fire, which that plant is probably two to three times the size of a Bunnings Warehouse, as we all acknowledge.

5 So it has a similar footprint, although not as high, and I notice that whoever did the drawing of the Plasrefine facility, the drawing was taken away from the artist before they could put the smokestacks in. So this is about three or four storeys high. So that gives you some sort of aspect to the relationship between the size of the firefighting equipment and the size of the fire.

10 If I can just go to the last slide, please. So I went through the guidelines for access for fire brigade vehicles and firefighters. It's online and it gives the specifications for a building as to what should be in place to allow access for firefighters and equipment. That is the Plasrefine site. The white is the road around the site. Now, 15 that is to specification. You have to have a ring road around the site. I don't dispute that's not to specification. It is. And if the building is higher than a certain height, then you need to make allowance for specialised firefighting equipment, which is a minimum of a 6 metre lane around the facility. Six metres is the width of your double garage.

20 Now, I don't think anybody in their right mind, when you've got plastic burning at 1,200 degrees centigrade and a fire which is 3 to 4 storeys high, that you're going to take one of those vehicles up the side of this building, put the stabilisers out and then extend a ladder and hope that you can actually reach to the right trajectory 25 where you can actually put the fire out.

30 So despite the fact that it meets the requirements as in terms of the guidelines, it's not practical, you cannot actually drive fire vehicles up around this building, park then put stabilisers out and think that you can actually make a difference. The type of equipment that you need needs to be further away from the building and obviously the kind of agents that you're using would not be in your normal pumper.

35 So there are a number of reasons why this is just not practical and that footprint is quite confined. Now, if you look at that, you have a road on two sides, on the west or on your left side of the diagram and on the south side is where the actual road may or may not be. So you have the only two sides of this site where you can actually realistically try and fight a fire which is burning at 1,200 degrees centigrade and have the distance from the fire where you can actually get the 40 correct trajectory.

45 So the point I'm trying to make here is if this facility catches fire, it's almost going to be impossible to fight it. Imagine that plant being two to three times the size of the Bunnings Warehouse in Mittagong where you can actually effectively fight that fire from two sides, not having access to the other two sides because that would be like suicide alley. So from a pure practical point of view, we can actually expect that if a fire does start in this plant, it will burn until there's nothing left to burn. It'll be left to burn. I can't see any other way that actual

firefighting equipment with the restricted access now only being – access only being on the left-hand side and the bottom of the diagram would be effective in actually being able to extinguish the blaze.

5 So it comes back to the point, you have a plant like that in flame, bellowing smoke into the air, all the contamination it's going to bring with it and this within a very close proximity to, as we said, residential areas and within a large proportion of the space around this would have to be evacuated. So back to the point, this is not the right site from the pure practical perspective. Thank you.

10

**MS SYKES:** Rory, thank you very much for your submission. I'm just curious with your expertise, what are the agents that are used to fight fires?

15 **MR MATTHEWS:** I'm not an expert. I've just done desk research looking at the practical side of it and when I saw the site and I thought you have those kinds of temperatures and then I went through the regulations to see what regulations you need or are required for that site and it does seem to meet those regulatory requirements, I'm not familiar with what agents would be used on a chemical fire of this nature, I'm sorry.

20

**MS SYKES:** No, that's fine. Thank you very much.

**MR MATTHEWS:** Okay. Thank you.

25 **MR MILLS:** I understand we have Bruce Mumford here. Is that correct? We have Bruce. Thank you.

30 **MR BRUCE MUMFORD:** Hi. My name's Bruce Mumford and I've lived in the Southern Highlands for much of my life and in Moss Vale for the past 11 years. In 1990 I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and I eventually moved from Burrawang to Moss Vale to be closer to medical facilities, as my condition worsened, and I thought I'd be safer in town. Little did I know that I was actually moving myself into potentially much more danger.

35 I have been a member of many disability organisations, local, state and federal, both in an official capacity and also as an office holder and as a member, but I'm not speaking officially on behalf of any of those organisations. However, I do believe through my membership I have a pretty good understanding of the position and difficulties of people with disabilities.

40

45 The main thing with the plastics factory, which I've already been watching, is the toxic dust that will come from the factory. Now, that dust comes on the wind which is prevailing mainly from the west, which of course means it's coming from the factory directly towards Moss Vale, where I live. I know this because one of my favourite past times is just sitting out on my back veranda and looking at the gum tree in the back of our yard and watching the leaves blow and from that I can tell not only the direction of the wind but pretty close to the speed of the wind as well. And I can tell you that by far the wind blows from the west into Moss Vale



nearly every day. Now, I wouldn't be able to do that, sitting outside anymore once the factory is built obviously because I, like many other people with disabilities, would have to keep themselves inside in order to look after their own health.

5 If there was a fire in the factory, which we've been looking at, it's not unlikely. In fact as we know from the news all the time, it's more than likely, then the whole of Moss Vale may have to be evacuated for several weeks. Now, that just isn't possible for myself or people with a disability living at home or people in nursing homes or people in aged care homes which are numerous around Moss Vale and I  
10 can tell you from my own experience that just to do a trip for a brief overnight stay takes me up to three months to organise the accommodation, the transfer of equipment or the hire of equipment that I need, to manage the supplies I need. I am not going to go anywhere soon, unfortunately, and that's the same of many, many people. So we're in Moss Vale, we are stuck there.

15 The company – if this does happen, I haven't seen it but I would like to see their evacuation plan for Moss Vale if this does happen and I would also like to know what experience this company has managing evacuations of towns and sites. I haven't seen any of that either. But obviously for me that's essential information.  
20 The logical thing about the positioning of this factory to me seems to be to put it on near a major highway and/or railway a long way from any population centre. This is not what's been done at all, which suggests to me that there is a serious fault in the planning, also in their observations of the weather and the way the wind blows for the microplastics. So the planning itself seems to me to be entirely  
25 very much at fault.

The area would be completely devastated around here because no one would want to visit here for tourism or for sporting events such as the recent big bicycle challenge [unintelligible 04:13:40] cancelled because mess ups with the traffic  
30 control. But they just won't happen anymore because who's going to want to come here and involve themselves in breathing in the toxic fumes that will be around Moss Vale.

35 Also, I think of my father-in-law who used to come down here to visit our family regularly and he would say that he loved it in the highlands because the air was like breathing champagne. Unfortunately, he wouldn't be saying that now and neither will anyone else. He actually moved down to Moss Vale because he liked it so much from Dee Why, right on the beach at Dee Why down here. Now, no one is going to be moving down here in the future. No one would deliberately expose  
40 themselves and their families to the possible meltdown of the factory or just the day to day toxicity from the air coming from it.

45 I also think of my grandchildren and friends who come to visit me up here, in some cases from all over the state or even other parts of Australia because with MS, I can't travel anymore, so they come to visit me and that is something I could never ask them to do in the future, knowing that I'd be exposing them to danger. I also think of my many students, ex-students, I used to be a teacher, who still live in Moss Vale and they have businesses, many of them, and young families. And

again, what happens to them? The decisions we make about this Plasrefine factory really shows the commitment that we have to those people and their future lives. Thank you very much.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Just going to check again whether Chris Makeig is here. No, okay. There are a couple of people who offered to step up. I'm going to ask one of them to do so, Kerrie Barnett.

10 **MS KERRIE BARNETT:** Okay. [unintelligible 04:16:42] it looks scary but it isn't. Well, it is scary actually. Good afternoon everyone. I think it's afternoon. My name's Kerrie Barnett and I'm a long time resident of the Southern Highlands [unintelligible 04:16:56] and I have children and grandchildren living and working and going to school here.

15 I'm speaking today because after attending early meetings about Plasrefine a couple of years ago and making the proper written submission, I have heard nothing more. I thought it must have gone away to a more suitable location, that is a non-residential location instead of metres away from a new housing development, as we now know it to be. Also, I'm speaking because I couldn't face  
20 my grandchildren if I didn't.

So my first point then is there has been no transparency for a project the size, as we've heard, of several Bunnings stores planning to be built near houses. I mean, it beggars belief really. Yet this vibrant community of ours has become  
25 well-informed thanks to our clever and persistent team of researchers and leaders and now a new shire council. I understand that the government is desperate to solve the rising tide of plastic waste. Who isn't? We see it creeping up upon us every day. But is it sensible to position a solution so as to obstruct and negate prior investment in another solution to another community problem?

30 So this is now my second point, the waste of government money and the negation of significant generational planning. I refer to the aforementioned 250,000 the government has invested already to develop regional and creative employment in the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, otherwise known as SHIP. This project is  
35 intended for the light industrial area of Moss Vale. There are also many new housing developments in the Moss Vale area in accordance with the government's express need for more accommodation. Plasrefine's development will negatively affect both these initiatives.

40 My third point is that plastics recycling in a populated area is a serious public health issue in the making despite the fact that we were told earlier that the Health Department didn't want to make a comment or wasn't interested. That is going to develop if this goes ahead. Now, public health is just that, public, meaning it has a wide reach and health, which applies to all levels of our lives, physical, mental and  
45 emotional. Do we want Plasrefine in our backyards? No, we don't and not ashamed to say so. But is plastics recycling suitable for anyone's backyard? Do we think it is? No, we don't.

Just how public is this issue? Let's look at water, essential for health. Already, money needs to be spent to clean up the forever chemical debacle that we've recently heard about and now contrary to a mistaken perception in the Plasrefine report, the waterways from here do flow into Warragamba Dam, so now there could be new contamination of Sydne's water as well as our own by nanoparticles form the recycling process. And what about the water shortages in a dry season? Imagine for a moment all those trucks bringing plastic from Queensland to Victoria and the amount of water required to process that quantity. Well, Sydney will share those shortages with us.

Then there's the power needed by this hungry monster. Where will that come from? More power cuts? And finally, what about clean air? Experts in the field tell us that the electrostatic properties of these chemical nanoparticles, which are part of the recycling process, mean they latch on to everything. They stick to your hands, to the outside of the many trucks coming and going out on the freeway, bits blowing all over. And locally, taken by our prevailing winds, they would spread across the highlands to settle on farm dams and domestic routes, on our crops and our vegie gardens. Some of this produce will be consumed out of the area and so the reach widens. Not to mention our schools and our next generation. How much microplastic is good for us to ingest? I'd suggest none.

My fourth and final point is that plastics recycling is an unsuitable industry for populated areas. So what to do? Find a non-residential site for this project, please. For the people of today and the future of our children and grandchildren. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you for those speakers who've stepped forward from their allotted time. We are getting close back to the track. We will take a break pretty shortly but because we are head of time and we are trying to ensure that we hear all sides, I am going to offer the applicant a further five minutes to finish their presentation.

**MS CAVALLO:** Thank you. Can we go to slide 8, I think it is? Slide 9, thank you. Thank you for the time. The proponent received a number of submissions concerning the suitability of the site for the proposed recycling facility. While these concerns were noted, the proposal has strategic and site specific merit. There are appropriate mitigation measures proposed and included in the draft conditions that respond to the concerns raised during engagement. In keeping with the guidelines for EIS consultation set out by the Department, significant changes to the proposal have been made throughout the process of engagement and as a direct result of feedback. These are shown on the slide and I'll speak to only some of these.

Change in access route from an east-west alignment to a north-south alignment, which is consistent with the MVEC DCP. Relocation of the existing rail crossing, enabling a safer 90 degree angle of approach from both the north and south. Decrease in building heights from 18 metres to between 12 and 15 and a half metres, noting that there is no maximum height for the precinct in the LEP and the

DCP guides a maximum height of 20 metres. Truck movements would decrease by the use of vehicles up to 19 metres and increased material density through baling.

5 Building openings and delivery area was moved from the eastern sides of the facility to the western side, following discussions with ABR. And there's a decrease in wastewater discharge by at least 20%. The remainder, which is equivalent to one large domestic rainwater tank, will be managed through reuse on site, filtering and alternative discharge arrangements.

10 Next slide, please. Visual mitigation of the facility through construction of mounds to increase the efficiency of the planted screens. There will be planting of over 170 mature trees to provide screening while other new vegetation is established and some of this landscaping will take place as early works prior to major construction. Water consumption has decreased and the daily water demand has decreased by 60% by optimising water use for amenities and reducing evaporation from the washing process. Stormwater management impacts will be avoided on the shared pond with ABR.

20 Next slide, please. And finally, the Department's assessment report recommends approval, subject to conditions. The assessment report notes that the development is consistent with the strategic planning directions of both the state and local government. It contributes to the state's target of tripling plastic recycling by 2030. It will divert waste from landfill and transform it into usable products. It will generate social and economic benefits through a capital investment of \$88 million and up to 140 local jobs during operation.

25 New South Wales Health, Water New South Wales, the EPA, Heritage New South Wales, Biodiversity Conservation Directorate and Transport for New South Wales do not object to the proposal and have provided draft conditions of consent. The Department considers that this development can be realised without significant amenity or environmental impacts and therefore considers the development is in the public interest and could be approved subject to conditions. Thank you for the additional time.

35 **MS JANETT MILLIGAN:** So I just had a question for you, please. I note your advice that the height of the building is [unintelligible 04:27:09] in response to what you heard from [unintelligible 04:27:12].

40 **MS CAVALLO:** Yes.

**MS MILLIGAN:** I just [unintelligible 04:27:13] clarify [unintelligible 04:27:17] ventilation shaft – some people called them smokestacks, but everybody referred to them being 22 metres high and a number of people said they weren't shown on the plans. So can you clarify that issue?

**MS CAVALLO:** Sofie, could you [unintelligible 04:27:38] clarify the issue?

5 **MS MASON-JONES:** Thank you. The building form ranges from 12 to 15.5 metres. The stacks or vents, they're referred to either way, are 2 metres. There are a couple of them. They sit above the 15.5 form. Stacks, if you look at the definition of a building height, are not a required element to be considered in a building height. So the building height is 15.5 and the stacks or events are 2 metres in height.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry, I asked the question just to clarify the height and I think the answer's been given. So the building height is up to 15 and a half metres and there are two stacks that are a further 2 metres. So the maximum height is 17.5.

**MS MASON-JONES:** Built form, yes.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you.

**MS MASON-JONES:** Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** We'll now adjourn for lunch. We will return at 2.05. Thank you.

20 **LUNCH BREAK**

**MR MILLS:** All right. So welcome back, everyone. We're good to start. We are going to start with Gabby Kent, please.

25 **MS GABBY KENT:** Testing, yes. Thank you IPC representatives for coming here today and listening to us in person. My family and I live on Bulwer Road. We moved here in 2010 and we're about 500 metres from the proposed facility and we've raised our family here. We have actively contributed into this community through volunteering activities and we're heavily invested in the future of this area.

30 We are one of the residents that received that ill-timed, ill-considered letterbox drop from GHD on Christmas, I think it was Eve, 2020. Yes, it was terrible. Advising us of an upcoming plastics facility and requesting to install noise monitors. Look, once beyond the initial shellshock, we took a fact reason based approach to understand it. But over the course of four years, what we have observed has caused concern and even alarm. What we observed was a single minded dogged determination by the proponent who did not appear to be listening to us, just seemingly ticking boxes and engaging consultants to get this through whatever the obstacles. A complex New South Wales planning system where entirely inappropriate developments can still proceed through. And a loss of trust and confidence during the process.

40 In the Plasrefine reports and community engagement activities had errors and omissions, reasonable requests not addressed. We employed an independent professional town planner to go through the entire proposal and some of the things that he raised are still not addressed. Material issues deferred to be addressed later and misinformation, either accidental and intended. And a quick example of that

was the social impact survey that went out where it showed the incorrect traffic route that really actually only impacted very few but the one that was actually active impacted hundreds and this is the one that has actually caused quite a lot of concern. It is not the traffic route that is actually proposed [unintelligible 05:28:13].

It became abundantly clear to us that we were just speed humps and it felt like the proponent had to be forced to make concessions, driven by community feedback and then the Department coming back and saying, “Hey, you need to make these adjustments.” They weren’t prepared to listen to reasonable community feedback and if they had, for example, they would’ve stopped that internal Moss Vale Road route immediately and not wait for the Department to step in.

We have a few concerns with this proposal but I’ll raise two. One, we are concerned about the risk for the plastic pollution specifically getting into the water with the design and location of the facility. You’ve all heard today how windy Moss Vale is. I know exactly how windy Moss Vale is and I downloaded 14 months of BOM data to actually analyse it. We have wind gusts coming from the west that exceed 100 km/h and it’s just not unusual. The proposed site, you have heard about this today in the facility design, is extremely exposed with three large roller doors facing on to the west for the trucks to enter. With 50 inbound trucks per day, these doors will be open for a few hours. Unprocessed and processed table like salt consistency can escape out of this facility into the air, landscape and our drinking water.

GHD would argue that they have an extensive landscaping plan but that was designed for visual mitigation and riparian water conservation. From my reading of it, it is nothing to do with wind mitigation. Now, I have researched wind mitigation. I did this for our own site. It is designed over a much wider space. It is designed to gradually slow wind. The way that the site is designed with this big pile of soil and the trees on top, wind will come in, it hits it, it goes up over the top and then bang down on the other side and it creates turbulence. This wind will bang down right around where those door facilities are.

We have risks of the toxic pollution from fire. We’ve heard all about fire today. This is a very large facility and it can burn for a long time. It is not unlikely that this facility actually goes up in fire. As a volunteer firefighter, I do have some understanding of this and I can tell you now, if that thing beeps and is on fire, I will not be going to attend to it. Yes.

This proposed facility may be legally permissible. The proponent may have complied with all laws, policies and processes. But is it good planning? Does this proponent have a trust record? We operate within the law, a set of rules and guidelines, trust underpins everything. Is there trust and confidence that they will build and operate in good faith to run such a sensitive and environmentally complex facility? You can try and manage this development, you can set conditions, you can regulate it until the cows come home, assuming the legislation is there.

5 But is it expensive? For everyone it is red tape and what is driving it? A lot of it is actually the location. It is next to residential, incompatible business and environmentally sensitive area. Will this be a state significant development that contributes to solving our plastic problems or will it be a state significant disaster? An environmental polluter, a thorn in the side of government, class actions and compensation. To me it is like putting lipstick on a pig.

10 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Gabby. Is Skye Pope available?

15 **MS SKYE POPE:** Midget height, yes. Ladies and gentlemen of the Independent Planning Commission. My name is Skye Pope and I've lived and worked in the Southern Highlands for 45 years. Hard to imagine, I know. Thank you for allowing me to address you today regarding the proposed construction of the Plasrefine facility in Moss Vale.

20 First, I would like you to consider the significant risk of fire associated with the Plasrefine factory. This [unintelligible 05:32:48] handle materials that pose an inherent danger of catastrophic fire. The spate of fires in other plastics recycling facilities over the past five years in Australia and around the world have largely been caused by waste contaminated batteries, gas bulbs and vapes hidden within the waste. This is a huge risk that the proponent has already acknowledged is beyond their control.

25 Our region has limited resources when it comes to combating a disaster of this scale, relying entirely on our first responders and one single locally located hazmat truck. All other emergency resources would need to travel from Campbelltown, Wollongong and further afield in such an emergency, at least 45 minutes away. The introduction of a facility with such potential hazards is alarming and the impact on local residents, the environment and neighbouring businesses such as Australian BioResources, which is located less than 100 metres from the processing building, is unacceptable on all levels. We cannot afford to compromise our community's safety. This clearly highlights that this is not the right site for this proposal.

35 It is crucial to address the objections raised by Wingecarribee Shire Council. The Council has expressed serious concerns regarding the lack of availability of essential services to support the Plasrefine development and has stated that this proposal is out of sequence with the development of the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, which is referred to as the SHIP. Our infrastructure, including roads, emergency services, water and wastewater management is already under pressure.

40 The addition of a facility like Plasrefine's before the infrastructure can be put in place would exacerbate this issue, stretching our resources even thinner. We need to prioritise the wellbeing of our community and the ability for our shire to grow in a sustained and measured manner. We must consider the implications that this facility will have on the SHIP masterplan, which aims to guide sustainable

development in our area. The SHIP masterplan focuses on enhancing community wellbeing, preserving our environment and promoting responsible development.

5 The parcel of land that Plasrefine has purchased is located within the SHIP's biotech sub-precinct. Development of such a site by a heavy industry proposal such as Plasrefine would jeopardise the development of the biotech precinct moving forward. The Plasrefine facility stands in stark contrast to these goals. Its presence could undermine the progress we have made in shaping a vibrant, sustainable community, jeopardising years of planning and investment by the New South Wales state government in our shire's future.

10 Community concerns are another critical factor in this discussions. Residents have expressed worries about the increased traffic, noise and pollution resulting from the facility's operation. The potential disruption to our quality of life is unacceptable and we have a responsibility to safeguard our environment and your community's wellbeing.

15 Lastly, I urge you to consider whether this is truly the right site for this facility. There are alternative locations which The Honourable Wendy Tuckerman MP has personally offered to find for the proponent that would be more appropriate for industrial developments, places where the impact on residents and adjoining businesses would be minimised and where safety measures can be effectively implemented.

20 In conclusion, the objections to Plasrefine's facility come from legitimate concerns about the fire risk, inadequate infrastructure, the ability to implement the SHIP masterplan and the overall wellbeing of our community. I implore you to carefully weight these issues as you deliberate on the proposal. I also request that The Honourable Paul Scully, Member for Wollongong, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, formally request that the IPC conduct a public hearing into this, not just a meeting. I am here today as a concerned resident, as someone whose livelihood faces direct impact due to this site and as a parent who would like her children to grow up in this area. Thank you for your time.

25 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Alexandra Springett.

30 **MS ALEXANDRA SPRINGETT:** Just speak now. Okay, lovely. Well, I won't be offering you any new facts. You've heard them all, I think. But I just hope that repetition of good facts becomes a petition for perfection. Let's see.

35 The DPHI has investigated – identified the key issues re the Plasrefine plastics recycling plant proposed for Moss Vale as being social, visual, proximity to Garvan Institute and operational traffic impacts. While these are valid impactful issues indeed, the pole one is that a plastics recycling factory is a hazardous industry, releasing toxic microplastics into both air and water.

40 The Plasrefine building design with several air stacks and roller doors opening constantly to allow passage of trucks in and out would certainly release toxic



microplastics into the air. These airborne microplastics are well documented to cross the placenta of an unborn baby, cause multi-organ cancer in people and attach to bees instead of pollen being able to do so, thereby disabling pollination of agricultural crops. Despite the applicant's assurances, local water will also be contaminated, such as the adjacent Wingecarribee River, which is part of Sydney's water supply, flowing as it does into the Warragamba Dam.

Professor Ian Wright, a water scientist at Western Sydney University, has done intensive research into this waterway and concludes that toxic industry such as a coal mine would severely impact the quality of both local and Sydney drinking water. A plastics recycling and manufacturing factory would also emit toxins in the form of microplastics and these would pollute the river as well.

Another potential hazard is fire and there have been several at Australian plastics recycling factories in the last few years. A fire at this Plasrefine factory sited very closely to residences, schools, a day-care centre and indeed much of Moss Vale would also spread toxic fumes over most of the Southern Highlands with obvious negative impacts.

In addition, the extinguishing material used by firefighters is PFAS foam, which is in itself toxic, especially when it enters waterways. Of note is the article re PFAS contamination in The Sydney Morning Herald this week, October 2024, it's entitled, "Enormous implications. Australia's tap water cleanup could cost billions."

The IPC made a sound decision a few years ago when it ruled against the Hume Coal Mine proposed for the Southern Highlands. The panel's determination was on the basis of detriments to water and air, environmental destruction, peril to local agriculture and the impacts of huge truck movements on both highways and local roads. It will be hoped in recognition of the same impacts that this good reasoning will prevail again for the hazardous industry of a plastics recycling factory being proposed for the Southern Highlands now. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Would Thelma Johnson be available? Thank you.

**MS THELMA JOHNSON:** Thank you. My name is Thelma Johnson. I grew up here in the Southern Highlands, going to local schools and went away for a career in Canberra. I'm back with succession planning, taking over the management of possibly the largest koala sanctuary and it's in Canyonleigh. Moss Vale is our local town.

I also speak today on the basis of a career in Canberra helping communities rise out of poverty and in particular my work with Australian Red Cross in an emergency services preparedness trainer and coordinator for Southern New South Wales and the ACT and in particular with my experience of the explosion in a chemicals factory in the ACT, where we had to evacuate many hundreds of people. And the experience that gave me in realising how very, very vulnerable communities are to toxic unexpected events.

Firstly, I speak on behalf of the forms of life that can't be here today because they don't speak English, that's the animals and the other forms of life that we live amongst and we're so fortunate in the Southern Highlands to be able to do so.

5 Much of our economy is based on the beautiful environment that we have here and it would be such a terrible shame if that was impacted negatively in our tourism. And in just the pure fact of having and nurturing what has been here for thousands and millions of years and the lifeforms that have evolved here and we as people come here and we have such a history of destroying and impacting negatively on  
10 those.

I think a lot of us have only recently come to realise the dangers of microplastics. Plastics was such a handy thing to have and solved a lot of problems until they didn't. Now we're finding that plastics are in placentas of mammals. Placentas are  
15 only there for a very short time. In humans it's a maximum of nine months and yet they're finding these toxic substances, which we do not yet know the full extent of the damage that they cause in these very short-term organs and obviously other organs in mammals and other lifeforms as well. We have deep concerns of that.

20 Being the top of the water catchment into Sydney's water is very concerning and we, the Wingecarribee Shire Council and residents and primary producers, we are all working so terribly hard to reduce any toxins going into Wingecarribee River for our own health but also for the health of the broader Sydney catchment. The Southern Highlands is on the very edge of the Sydney basin, geologically  
25 speaking, and with gravity, just gravity pulls everything down and with some of these – we've had now in the last few years we've had three of the most – thank you – three of the most intense rain events, which caught a lot of us by surprise. We didn't know it could rain – this was more rain than in living memory. Three of them in the last few years over COVID and no one knew that the water would go  
30 in those places.

And by the way, I see that on the map of this application there's a waterway that appears to be going uphill. I think this application is ill advised and we oppose it. I think it needs to be looked at again. Something needs to be done with plastics, of  
35 course it does, it's too close to residential facilities, it's too close to primary production and it's too close to the waterways. And we have so very many vulnerable people here in Moss Vale, elderly, disabled, children, who do not have the resources in an emergency to escape and even to take cover indoors. Our old heritage houses are not airtight at all and you cannot keep toxic smoke out of these  
40 places just by shutting the doors and the windows. It's not appropriate and people will have long-term health effects if there's a fire. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Thelma. Our next speaker is Sharn Campbell.

45 **MS SHARN CAMPBELL:** How's that. Okay. Good afternoon. My name is Sharn Campbell and my family moved down to the Southern Highlands in 1982 and we've lived on a bush block less than 2 km from the village of Berrima for nearly 40 years now. Forty years next year in fact. My property has a frontage to

the Wingecarribee River and we and our children have enjoyed watching the platypus in the river swimming around and accessing their burrows. Admittedly, more often when the kids were young but lately we've been looking for them with our grandchildren as well.

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My concern with the Plasrefine factory, I'm actually more focused on one issue, is with the waste water they will be discharging, which will then head downstream into the Wingecarribee River. Those plastics to be recycled are first washed and the wastewater from that will contain microplastics. There's no [unintelligible 05:49:32] reduce their size, but still [unintelligible 05:49:41] microplastics in that wastewater, which affect and remain in the bodies of people and of wildlife and that many plastics also contain PFAS, which is carcinogenic to people and to wildlife.

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In Wingecarribee region, we're lucky to still have some unique and special wildlife including both of the only two monotreme mammals in the world, namely the platypus and the echidna. Our local platypus population spend their entire lives in and on the banks of the Wingecarribee River, so they rely on having clean water for their ultimate survival. Of concern is that some months ago a dead platypus was found in the river in the village of Berrima itself and this body was found to have PFAS chemical microplastics in its body.

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Consequently, if more of this deadly material is discharged into the waterway, then we're putting the survival of all of our local platypus in danger, which would be an unnecessary tragedy not just for their local population but possibly also for the ultimate survival of the species itself. We could also be concerned for any other creatures that live in the river, including any fish species, which if caught and eaten, would then endanger the life of those people as well.

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I'm sure that you're all also aware, having been told many times so far, that the Wingecarribee River flows into Warragamba Dam and thus is part of the Sydney water catchment. This would mean that those deadly microplastics will be in Sydney's water supply. Imagine having to deal with the people of Sydney finding out that not only do the Blue Mountains dam contain them but now they're also in their main dam, which supplies most of their drinking water.

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I therefore end my submission by asking that this development application by Plasrefine be rejected. It is in a totally inappropriate location, endangering both the lives of all of the millions of people downstream and also the lives of our very precious wildlife, starting with our very vulnerable local platypus population. Thank you for listening to me.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Heidi Fagan.

45

**MS HEIDI FAGAN:** Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Independent Planning Commission in person for the recycling proposal, Plasrefine for Moss Vale. As a concerned member of the community, I must challenge the assertion that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure made that

the proponent has genuinely listened to our concerns or prepared and submitted an adequate environmental statement.

5 The reality is that the changes made to the proposal were primarily driven by their inability to secure their preferred access route, not by sincere effort to address the community impacts. Under the environmental planning and assessment regulation, the EIS for a SSD project must be prepared having regard to the SSD guidelines, prepared by the Planning Secretary. The EIS should be consistent, prepared in a high standard, comprehensive and clearly describe the project whilst reflecting the community's views. They must contain technically robust assessment of impacts and justify the project holistically, considering the economic, environmental and social factors through the lens of ecologically sustainable development.

15 However, the EIS for the proposal falls well short of these requirements in critical areas. The EIS fails to comply with the requirements of the SEARs in the failure to provide a detailed assessment which includes a description of the existing environment using sufficient baseline data. This is based on a failure to include sufficient baseline data on the level of microplastics in the existing environment, including the existing level of microplastics in the surrounding water and the air. 20 This failure to comply with the clause 191 of the EPA regulation which provides that the environmental impact statement must comply with the environmental assessment requirements notified under s 176 or s 5.16(4) of the EP&A Act.

25 The effect of this is that the authority cannot make a valid determination providing the DA in accordance with the requirement of the EP&A Act. The failure also undermines the Commission's ability to be able to, as a consent authority, required under sub-s 4.15(1)(b) of the EP&A Act to take into consideration the likely impacts of the development, including the environmental impacts on the natural environment. The Commission cannot undertake this task because the EIS does 30 not include the requisite detailed assessment of the existing environment, utilising sufficient baseline data as required by the SEARs to enable this to occur.

35 In relation to microplastics, the Department's assessment report makes no comment, nor does it provide any substantiated conclusion as to the existing baseline levels of microplastics in the environment or whether and where this has been addressed in the EIS. The acceptability of proposed development's impacts, particularly its significant and yet unquantified microplastic generation remains undetermined. Without the required baseline data and through analysis in the EIS, it is impossible to draw any valid conclusions about these impacts.

40 Secondly, due to this non-compliance with the SEARs requirements, the EIS then lacks sufficient information for the authority to determine if the proposal meets jurisdictional prerequisite for consent under 6.16 of the Biodiversity and Conservation SEPP has or has it not been met. The development consent cannot, 45 must not be granted to development relating to any part of the Sydney drinking water catchment unless the consent authority is satisfied that carrying out of this development would have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality. Without a detailed assessment of existing baseline water quality conditions regarding

microplastics in the EIS, the Commission cannot determine if the development would in fact have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality. This alone should be grounds for refusing a development application.

5 In conclusion, I urge the Commission to recognise these significant shortcomings in the environmental assessment process and the community deserves a thorough scientifically rigorous evaluation of this proposal and the impacts before any determination is made. Thank you for your consideration.

10 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Dawn Schubert.

**MS DAWN SCHUBERT:** That all right? The social impact, a lived experience. The DPHI assessment report on Plasrefine states in its opening paragraphs, regarding the social impact of this development, they identified several high  
15 negative social impacts. Effects on people’s sense of place and surroundings, potential impacts on psychological health and stress, anxiety and fear. Let me highlight the words, “High negative impact” and secondly, “Potential impacts on psychological health from stress, anxiety and fear.”

20 This is not an irrational fear. Not a fear of the unknown. My stress and anxiety about my future is real and here is my lived experience. My husband and I have been planning our retirement for many years. Our home is on the southern corner of Bulwer Road and Beaconsfield. We do not overlook the Plasrefine site. Our plan was to subdivide our land in half, build a new home on the vacant block and  
25 sell our existing home to fund our retirement. Do a few trips, enjoy life.

We started this process long before Plasrefine surfaced. Things were going well. Subdivision complete. New home nearing completion. So we put our old home on the market in spring 23. Initial interest was good. We had several keen buyers who  
30 had come back for a second inspection. However, once they discovered Plasrefine’s plans for the end of Beaconsfield Road, they were never seen again. I was told it was the same story further along Beaconsfield Road for some vacant blocks of land.

35 A statement from my real estate agent. “Offers tabled at the time were clouded and diluted by this prospect of the facility gaining approval. Anecdotally, as one of the leading agents in the area, I can share on several occasions this week I have been stopped by local residents and asked about whether the facility is progressing and if so, its impacts on their property values in Moss Vale. It’s impossible to  
40 mathematically quantify the impact on property prices but it doesn’t take a licensed real estate to determine the prospect as being negative.”

45 The fear of lower land values is real. People will not want to buy properties anywhere near this development. We had our property valued by a certified professional valuer prior to putting it on the market and if we were able to sell now, we are looking at least a 20% reduction of value from the valuer’s price or more. My stress and anxiety over my future is just one small story in this neighbourhood.

5 The proposed mitigation strategies to reduce the community's stress and anxiety are laughable. Professor Ryan found mitigation measures proposed by the applicant would reduce many of the negative impacts perceived by the community. This is not a perception. This is people's lives, health and wellbeing that are being tossed about so casually. It all depends on which lens you are looking through.

10 Plasrefine were offering EAP services, employee assistance program. That is free access to psychological help to relieve our stress. I have nothing against psychologists, my husband is one and my daughter is one but certainly this is not going to help our stress [unintelligible 06:01:32] anxiety. So we aren't going to relive our stress and anxiety by seeing a psychologist.

15 Professor Ryan continues that any remaining negative impacts will be sorted by implementing their social impact management plan and getting us involved in a community engagement plan and a community consultative committee. That will relieve all our stress, all our anxiety and our fear. Where are we now? Our lives are currently in a holding pattern. We can't move forward with enjoying our retirement. We have had to rent out our old house, we have moved into our new home but it's not completely finished at this stage because we have no money. This has all been very stressful and worrying financially to us.

20 I get extremely angry at how Plasrefine, GHD and now the DPHI dismiss our existence. The DPHI concludes the proposal adequately addresses the social impacts and the development would be unlikely to significantly impact the local community. Yep, sure.

25 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Dawn. The next speaker is Bev Hordern.

30 **MS BEV HORDERN:** Good afternoon, Commissioners. Thank you for this opportunity. I have three main concerns. The first is land use conflict and unsuitable site selection. I live just 200 metres from the site on land zoned conservation 4, which according to New South Wales Department of Planning is about conserving the environmental values and natural qualities in areas where it applies. C4 residential land between us and the site has just a narrow residential road between it and the site. There is no buffer.

35 We have been told by GHD that Plasrefine has a right to occupy general industrial land because it is a permissible use. I strongly contend that based on the scale, nature and intensity of the proposed development's operation, it is properly characterised as a potentially hazardous heavy industry that should be situated in a heavy industrial zone. However, even based on its current IN1 zoning, Plasrefine is totally inconsistent with two critical objectives of that zoning and I quote, "To minimise any adverse effect of industry on other land users and to ensure that new development and land uses incorporate measures that take account of their spatial context and mitigate any potential impacts on neighbourhood amenity and character or the efficient operation of the local or regional road system."

5 If this massive factory is built on the current site, the SHIP will be sunk along with Garvan. It will dominate the landscape for kilometres with emissions, noise, vibrations, light spill and traffic in its 24/7 operation and we, the ratepayers, will be forever covering the cost of damage to our roads. The riparian zones will be impaired and water quality in the Sydney water catchment will be at great risk. An inspection of the topography of the site illustrates this.

10 Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. I support plastic recycling and whilst acknowledging the pressing need worldwide to find a solution, this is not the right site. The applicant refused an offer from Mrs Wendy Tuckerman MP to find a more suitable site comparable to Brightmark, 7 km out of Parkes. This is a company with proven experience in plastic recycling which has managed to find a suitable site. Plasrefine has not.

15 My second point is social impact. 600 objections, 400 people at a public meeting and many wishing to speak here indicate the scale of the social impact on our community, concerned for their health, safety and the environment. It is incomprehensible that there was no health study as part of the SIA and that the Health Department did not provide an agency response.

20 This proposal holds inherent danger due to the acknowledged risks the leaking of forever chemicals, microplastics and chemicals of concern pose. How can this be approved when in appendix 2 of the Department's assessment report, there are 27 and I quote, "Revised environmental mitigation measures to be incorporated into the management plans where relevant." Who decides the relevance? These are all after the fact and indicate unacceptable risks to the community. Twenty-seven promises which, and I quote, "Will be developed prior to commencement of construction," et cetera.

30 The most concerning of all is under fire risks and they say, "Plans to be developed prior to commencement of operation." Fire, as you heard, is a real and present danger to the nearby residences and how fear of these catastrophic events without the resources nearby, how could this project ever get beyond this point? I'm trying to rush and messing it up. And to say the smoke will rise vertically is just an insult to anyone's intelligence.

35 My third and final point is the process. When responding to the two EISs, a non-negotiable period of just four weeks to digest and respond to literally thousands of pages of technical information was imposed. Requests for an extension of time fell on deaf ears. Yet when the proponent failed to meet a stated response date, we were told by Planning that this date was not our statutory deadline as such. One rule for them and one for us.

45 There is a solution, find the right site for a development of this scale and intensity. There is nothing intrinsic about the site which says, "Please place a plastic factory here." The proponent does not have to be denied permission to recycle plastic in Australia, just not on this site. The proponent has no social licence to do so and

approval of the DA would be contrary to the public interest. Thank you for your time.

**MR MILLS:** Graham Hordern? Thank you.

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**MR GRAHAM HORDERN:** My wife and I have been residents for 39 years. We've raised our family here. We enjoy our grandkids visiting our site at 52 Bulwer Road. We are close. Too bloody close to what's being proposed.

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The open and shutting doors that allow the hundred truck movements are in direct line with our kitchen. If you want to get a view, you're more than welcome. You can also view from our bedroom and our toilet and shower room. There is no mitigation cited in the proposal for truck noise and if you can imagine, directly in line, those doors going up and the trucks from 7 am in the morning going in and then reversing. Doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot. We're told this operation's 24/7. God help us.

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The past nearly four years have been a significant ordeal for my wife and I and our extended family and that followed a letterbox drop on Christmas Eve 2020, notifying of the Plasrefine development proposal and proponent's consultants GHD seeking to place noise monitoring equipment on our property. Merry Christmas.

25

Subsequently the development proposal has been all consuming. To effectively respond to two environmental impact statements prepared by GHD has required extensive research time, the pressure exacerbated by the biased process timeframe in the process. All the while we and the community have sought to come to terms with what approval of the development would have and personally for us on our remaining retirement years.

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So many people, local and beyond, have been either unaware of the development or with the lapse of time thinking it had understandably failed to proceed. The impact on our health, my wife and I, and our wellbeing is on show and it continues to be real. We have recognition of the need for a credible and sustainable response to the plastic waste issue and we are firmly in support of the visions of our elected council's Southern Highlands Innovation Park. As defined sensitive receivers, we are front and centre to the site of the proposed development. It short, it represents 24/7 in scale and form an assault on our health and senses, while compromising the nature of future development and viable employment opportunities.

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Yet the DPPI has determined that by its approval that the Plasrefine development is not a potentially hazardous industry, such that the criteria that underpins state environmental policy, SEPP 33, have not been applied under the specific determination. The question is when was this determination made? My understanding that such a determination is at the commencement of the process. As in the past four years of deliberation, the world's understanding of plastic waste recycling has significantly evolved, with revelations from credible scientific studies concerning the health and environment impacts of microplastics and



persistent organic pollutants, noting the unresolved frequency, scale and intensity of hazardous fires associated with plastic waste facilities locally, nationally and globally.

5 Noting that Plasrefine would store up to 20,000 tonnes of plastic materials on site. Noting the site's close proximity to residents like us, to neighbouring commercial and research facilities, their staff, our neighbourhood, the Southern Highlands communities. All the more on riparian land and in Sydney's water catchment.

10 The development is indeed potentially hazardous and demonstrates either an error in effectively applying SEPP 33 guidelines or that New South Wales policies and regulations and legislation are lagging behind the science behind plastic waste management, as they did historically with tragic circumstances, as we've heard today, tobacco, asbestos, and silicone dust.

15 In the current circumstances, we cannot say to current and future generations, "We didn't know of the threats." Drawing on my past professional capacity as a practising certified lead auditor in ISO 9000 management systems in both the private and public sectors, the plausibility that the proponent has the record or  
20 ability to consistently comply with the DPFI's multiple conditions recommendations is sheer fantasy. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. The next speaker is Wade Dever.

25 **MR WADE DEVER:** Thank you for permitting me to speak today. It's not the right site. I'm a local resident of Moss Vale and I've lived in the Southern Highlands for most of my life. I feel privileged to raise a family in the area. I'm speaking today on behalf of my friends and my family to express our alarming concerns and disbelief regarding the decision to recommend Plasrefine's plastic  
30 recycling facility on the current proposed site in Moss Vale.

We get it. Recycling is an incredibly important part of our future but it's not when it can potentially create more problems than you seek to rectify. Outside of the blatantly obvious and very serious concerns of road safety, congestion and  
35 degradation, a truck every seven minutes, inevitably this can't be coordinated and will lead to truck banking. People's homes and day-care facility within a few hundred metres of the site and many more just beyond with immense smells, sounds and vibrations inevitable, not to mention the rodent issues that is well known to impact the industry via contaminated wastes.

40 The what if a fire occurs situation, how do you evacuate childcare centres, aged care facilities and schools at the rate that would be required? It's not the right site. The people of the Southern Highlands are connected to their place. They live here for the beauty, the cleanliness and quality of life. The health concerns to residents  
45 in the Wingecarribee Shire and beyond are astronomical.

As we have heard, the site sits on two riparian zones and connected waterways. Riparian zones work as safeguards for the environment. These zones are inevitably

going to be overloaded with microplastics and chemicals from the facility, which will be transported into the Wingecarribee River. The same river that my daughter and her school friends swim on every Friday afternoon throughout summer, where friends and families walk along the river, connected to its natural [ore(?)  
5 06:18:08], where we can sit and watch the platypus. It's the same river system that feeds to Warragamba Dam, the water system that provides for Sydney. It's the foundation of many ecosystems. Let's not forget that rivers, ponds, wetlands and aquifers are all linked underground. What you do to one will impact the others.

10 I question how Plasrefine intends to keep microplastics and chemicals out of our waterways and ensure that our spiritual places are not destroyed. It's not the right site.

15 Research clearly highlights that existing plastic recycling facilities emit toxic pollutants into the air. These pollutants are linked to very serious health concerns. Those working within the facility, our community, are at even greater risk of rapid health deterioration. In addition, the distribution of odour and microplastics through our water patterns across all surrounding towns is highly likely.

20 We live on agricultural land, a resource that is diminishing worldwide. There is evidence that microplastics found in soils are accumulating in vegetables, fruits and crops. Research has shown that microplastics enter plants through their root systems from contaminated water and air. This allows them to be absorbed into the edible parts of the crops, which are then ingested by consumers. This will impact  
25 the home grower as largely as the commercial.

The implications of health include potential disruptions to digestive systems and exposure to toxic chemicals that microplastics often carry like PFAS. What  
30 filtration system does Plasrefine intend to use that'll ensure that odour, microplastics and chemicals do not end up in our waterways, air and environment which have the potential to cause catastrophic health problems and irreversible pollution. This is not the right site.

35 What consideration has been given to the potential and highly likely dismantling of the Southern Highlands Innovation Precinct, the SHIP, if Plasrefine was built? The SHIP is aimed at fostering economic growth and innovation in the Wingecarribee Shire and surrounding regions. It clearly aims to support  
40 community strengths and regional needs in agriculture and innovative industries and industries and research.

45 One consideration of the SHIP's planning framework's strategic goals is to ensure that future development is compatible with the character of the area and results in high quality built environments. How would Plasrefine's multistorey nearly 8 acre factories intend to maintain the character and integrity of the area? Or does it intend to vandalise our vertical landscape as well?

Furthermore, the SHIP provides a strong platform for giving the youth something to aspire towards, that it'll keep the community together and strong rather than

fragmenting it through people wanting to get out of a toxic environment. It's not the right site.

5 Research highlights that recycling plastic remains highly inefficient. Global recycling success rates are extremely low for collected mixed plastics. The diversity of plastic types, significant contamination issues and degradation of plastic quality after each cycle challenge the process immensely. As a result, large quantities of collected plastics end up unusable and in landfills, perpetuating environmental pollution.

10 Plasrefine currently state that they'll be recycling up to 120,000 tonnes of plastic. I ask what system and procedures are in place with potential of thousands of tonnes of unusable plastic waste generated and where is it going to go?

15 Lastly, I would also like to know how Plasrefine and the state government, what are they going to do to help reduce the plastic we consume, the core of this issue? Or is it viewed as another commodity to be mined like all the rest? This is not the right site.

20 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Wade. Craig Feldick?

25 **MR CRAIG FELDICK:** Good afternoon and thank you for coming here to listen to us and hear our many concerns with the Plasrefine application. The DPHI or the Department, the assessment report states in part, "The Department's assessment concludes the impacts of the development can be mitigated and/or managed to ensure an acceptable level of environmental performance." Well, I don't believe an acceptable level of environmental performance has been established based on what the scientific community know but more importantly what they are discovering and yet to discover about the effects of microplastics and PFAS and how to properly mitigate those effects.

30 What's happening, government action isn't keeping up with science, particularly in the past two years. We're seeing many reports about how microplastics and PFAS are created and released during plastics recycling and many types of single use plastics are just not recyclable because of their composition. Plastic production uses a wide variety of different chemical compounds, some of which are known to possess hazardous materials, like PFOA, a chemical that falls under the umbrella of PFAS. It doesn't break down easily and it can stay in the environment and in the human body for a long time, which is why it's referred to as a forever chemical.

35 The International Agency for Research on Cancer, which is part of the WHO, has classified PFOA as carcinogenic to humans. This chemical is only one of over 10,000 different chemicals used in plastic production, most of which haven't even been studied to determine if they're a threat detrimental to our health. More studies are emerging showing the potential and actual release of microplastics and PFAS during the plastics recycling process.

5 Interestingly, the social impact assessment prepared by Ethos Urban for Plasrefine acknowledges this fact. I quote, “There is evidence that plastic processing facilities such as recycling plants can contribute to microplastic pollution.” They continue, “A study conducted by [unintelligible 06:24:56] and others demonstrated the prevalence of microplastic pollution caused by plastic bottle recycling facilities, which was being ejected into the local environment through wastewater.”

10 This highlights perhaps the biggest concern that our community has with this proposal, contamination of our environment. Now, the Department in its assessment identified the key issues which you’ve already heard this afternoon. Social, visual, impacts on the ABR and operational traffic. Well, I have to say again, where are air quality and water quality? Why would that not be considered to be a key issue?

15 Our community doesn’t have the means to hire scientific experts to properly assess the exact dangers that we face and that our future generations will face from microplastics and PFAS. We must rely on government to help us out here and we believe government has let us down in recommending the plastics recycling facility be approved.

20 Our Council commented that although microplastics are an emerging contaminant, currently there is no legislative requirements to manage the complete removal of microplastics in wastewater. They went on to say that any industrial scale source for microplastics should be addressed at the source and not at the water treatment facility.

25 The EPA raised concerns over microplastics in the wastewater and advised that further information was required to be able to assess the environmental impacts on the development. They didn’t approve it. They need more information. And yet the Department is recommending approval. Okay, there are conditions that Plasrefine must meet before the facility can operate but the determination that those conditions are met lies with the Planning Secretary. In effect, bypassing this whole system that was intended with state significant development applications. You folks or a new IPC won’t come down here and called together to make the determination on whether or not Plasrefine has met the conditions. One person, the Planning Secretary, will make these determinations.

30 Now, we all want to be able to recycle but we want to recycle in a safe manner. What we don’t see are reliable assurances from the scientific community and government, state and federal, that our community will not be harmed by placing a recycling facility within a couple of hundred metres from residents, next door to a vital research facility and within the Sydney water catchment. Not having reliable up to date scientifically proven standards for recycling facilities cannot be an excuse to approve this application. Thank you.

45 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Craig. John Swainston, please.

**MR JOHN SWAINSTON:** Commission, thank you for allowing us to speak. I've lived in Bowral for almost nine years. I was a company director in the photographic industry for 40 years. I'm now a writer and a photographer, as some of you have seen, and a grandparent of a five year old at the preschool 600 metres from this site.

I sat on Australia's first battery recycling committee in 2005-6, working with the CSIRO to establish a viable capture, recycle and value creation business to prevent toxic but valuable metals, nickel-metal hydride and lithium, from going to landfill. The initiative failed then because the captured value was not adequate to find a market. For plastics, that value capture equation is substantially doubtful based on recent market pricing of virgin materials.

In theory, plastic recycling is a means to create valuable output from society's waste but the process is not infinite. Quality degradation occurs every time you recycle and ultimately plastic recycling only delays the placement of used plastics in landfill.

The real solution is to reduce plastic use at the front end, not recycle it. This proposal is poor in its economic viability for the investors, poor in real world risk management and the recommended development consent fails to address the realities of the location chosen for four critical reasons.

First, fire. We've had a number of inputs today. At present, Moss Vale has just one actively manned fire engine and one reserve fire engine. It then has backup support from the Rural Fire Service with several more appliances. Advanced appliances are about an hour away. None of these terms is specifically trained in the detailed complexities of a large chemical fire. The response time is unlikely to save the site. They just can't set up close enough to what would be an 1,100 degree fire and none of the five Highlands appliances are equipped to handle a 17 and a half metre structure including the stacks.

There are just two roads for entry and exit, one a residential street, the other over an unmanned rail crossing. The entire site and potentially adjacent properties would likely be lost. The real world risk is not addressed in this draft approval.

Second, microplastics emissions. With a projected 50 truck movements a day, twice, delivering and picking up, the projected 120,000 tonnes of material, allowing for 10 minute cycle to discharge or collect materials, would require the loading dock doors to be open eight hours a day. Based on other plastic recycling plants, up to 40% of material sent for recycling are not suitable and will leave unprocessed and go to landfill. That will have to be recompacted prior to transport out.

A much more comprehensive double door loading dock designed with a negative pressure envelope to contain microplastics is surely mandatory. But there's no space left on the property in the recommended design for this requirement to be added.

5 The third issue is water. In summary, I'll simply say the Moss Vale plant is already almost worn out. It cannot handle what it's dealing with today and it certainly can't handle microplastics. Removing the statically charged microplastic elements from discharged water is complex and is never foolproof. The ingress of microplastics to soils and air quality reduction for the whole Highlands community will be very significant. This is inadequately addressed in the recommended development.

10 Finally, all production plants have a useful life. Plastic recycling is a variety of chemical extraction, heat and other conversion techniques. Even Europe is only now waking up to the long-term impact of residual plastics in animals, children, unborn children, with the first legislation being discussed this week in Brussels.

15 Nowhere can I see the process for and assurance of land remediation at the plant's end of life. Who will pay? Where is the assurance the company has either the experience for land remediation or the financial ability at end of life? In this location, Plasrefine could potentially be a long term financial and environmental impact on the community that will be unaffordable to the company and to the community.

20 In my experience, this is an economically marginal development, it also contains multiple inadequately addressed risks. It is as yet not the right project and it's decidedly not the right site.

25 **MR MILLS:** Is Jill Cockram available? Thank you.

30 **MS JILL COCKRAM:** Got me. Can you hear? Yes, I know someone calls from the back, I'm willing to change places with somebody who can't. Thank you for this opportunity to talk today. I'm really pleased that the commissioners are going to listen to our concerns. Today I'm representing regenaction.org.au. We're a not for profit group dedicated to the regeneration of landscapes in Moss Vale and the broader Wingecarribee Shire. Our mission is clear, to promote ecological balance, restore native habitats and contribute to the reduction of the CO2 emissions through responsible land use and community driven initiatives. Today I'm here to express our strong opposition to the proposed Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility at this site.

40 Fresh clean water is precious. We, as a human race, dedicate space programs to finding sources of it somewhere in our solar system. We've got clean water down here already, we must look after it. I bet you didn't know and it was a shock to me when I learnt about this, that of all the water on Earth, only 3%, that's 3% of it is fresh, available drinking water. The rest is either sea water or locked up in ice and we don't yet know how climate change will affect our weather systems and water supply.

45 Water is the key to restoring degraded landscapes and is also key to the prosperity of places like the Southern Highlands. The partnership between water, soil, plants

and the sun underpins all life on Earth. This partnership is where our food comes from. We should be very careful not to disturb this relationship by damaging the natural watercourses which spread water across our landscape, recharging the aquifer and supporting our local food production initiatives. These food growing initiatives are an important part of the Southern Highlands economy and livelihoods which in turn are threatened by microplastics bonding to water and landing as dew on our pastures to be eaten by cattle and sheep and then we meat eaters then consume these microplastics.

Regen Action’s projects so far have centred on regenerating agricultural and urban food growing systems as well as improving soil water retention high in the cattle grazing areas in response to the damaging drought and fires of 2019. The scale and nature of this Plasrefine facility and the site chosen for its construction threatens the ecological balance and hydrological capacity of the surrounding area. How? Through disturbance to soils and natural waterflows during extensive building earthworks, we’ve all seen the footprint of this factory. Through continuing unsustainable use of town water, which is estimated at 46,000 kilolitres daily. Daily. And through the resulting pollution created in the process of washing dirty plastics prior to the recycling process and these are then stored in ponds on site.

Topographical maps demonstrate that this area has a network of springs and rivulets supporting a chain of ponds above the site. We earlier saw evidence via video of overflowing rivulets rushing down the proposed Plasrefine site. The proposed waste holding dams could be easily breached in episodic flood events. Such has happened as recently as 2016. This took the life of one local man and caused flooding of houses and retail stores in Moss Vale and around the shire. The breaching of the proposed sludge dams would likely overflow its polluted slurry of microplastics and other unknown pollutants like PFAS across the rural landscape below. We know this waste systems will enter natural systems emptying into the Wingecarribee River and the Sydney water storages.

The introduction of a large scale plastics recycling facility is fundamentally incompatible with our community’s vision for the establishment of a thriving environmentally conscious region. It stands to disturb natural habitats, disrupt waterflows and increase traffic through narrow rural roads as well as increase traffic in Moss Vale township itself.

Despite amendments in the revised application, the facility’s plans still fall well short of adequately addressing the true long-term environmental impact on the local landscape. The site selection remains flawed with key ecological areas and habitats placed at risk with scant information about the actual processes of recycling. We urge the Commission with its duty of care to its citizens to prioritise the long-term health and environmental sustainability of our region over short-term industrial gains. Please reject this proposal. It’s not the right site and probably not the right process. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Aldo Giachero.

**MR ALDO GIACHERO:** Thanks. Hi, everyone. Kylie from the Australian [Bedding(?) 06:40:48] Stewardship Council has reached out in the most recent times to me as an expert in air pollution control matters to provide my opinion about how this matter is handled in this new application from Plasrefine.

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I have spent the last 20 years of my career focusing on air pollution control. I started in Europe, so I have had exposure to systems in the European and US environment, which are governed by much stricter rules than Australia. And I currently work for a local company, we are based in Wollongong and we service all the main industries. We service the steel guys, we service the cement guys up here. So we make sure that all the environmental controls systems are in good order.

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So from a review of the environmental impact assessment, I could extract the following information and outcomes. A plastic refining process mainly leads to two types of emissions, one is airborne very fine particulate matter. The other one is volatile organic compounds which are generated when the material is heated mostly or extruded. The regulations that have been considered in these applications are the New South Wales ones, in particular the Protection of Environmental Operations [unintelligible 06:42:37] Act, which are notoriously the most stringent all across Australia.

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Depending on the type of process involved in the process [unintelligible 06:42:51] of the facility, bag houses – so bag filters are proposed to be used for controlling the airborne particulate matter and then for heated systems, a multi-stage treatment system is proposed to take care of dust, volatile organic compounds and the greasy oils. So this type of process is a multi-stage system that is composed by equipment that is called electrostatic precipitation [wet(?) 06:43:41] scrubbing and activated carbon is proposed in the assessment.

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According to our experience, these type of equipment are absolutely in line with the state of the art that you can find in Australia and also in Europe, right. So you have to consider that New South Wales has emission limits which to give you a number are typically 20 milligrams per normal cubic metre per hour from any extracted source. In Europe, we're talking about five and the equipment that is proposed for this facility is able to achieve the respect of the European limits.

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[unintelligible 06:44:34] operations as well are going to take place into an enclosed building, which is going to be kept under negative pressure mostly and that means that all the air that is extracted from the building is going to be effectively treated by means of these devices that I mentioned before.

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So in terms of type of industrial facility that we're talking about, a plastic recycling facility is definitely on a cleaner hand compared with other industrial facilities that are around the area. And I have to say we work with them all and this being a new industrial facility is subject to class 6 type facility from the New South Wales regulation, which is a much stringent regulation that the one that you would apply to existing facility, right.

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5 So in terms of impact, if you are worried about microplastics, for example, our opinion is that the amount of microplastics that can come out of this facility from an airborne source are nowhere near comparable or of any concern compared to what you actually generate in your own house. That's what it is, guys.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Seriously.

10 **MR GIACHERO:** Yes, I fight every day with my wife at home because my kids are playing on the carpet, are playing with tyres and that is a much major source. If you have a new jumper, it's made of polyethylene and you scratch it, you would create more microplastic out of that stuff than coming out of the stacks of this facility, which is distributed across the community. Another one, just to give an example, a facility like a cement plant, right, it's got electrostatic precipitators for dust control. What comes out of that stack is more than five times in concentration matter, in concentration terms, what is allowed for this facility.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** [unintelligible 06:46:55].

20 **MR GIACHERO:** That's harsh. That's really bad. Sorry.

**MR MILLS:** [unintelligible 06:46:55] this is not a place for debate between you and others. Did you have a question? No. Okay, thank you. Thank you. Our next speaker is Natalie Donnan.

25 **MS NATALIE DONNAN:** Good afternoon. I live in Moss Vale and Browley Street, close to the Plasrefine site. On my street is the Moss Vale Public Primary School, the Moss Vale Public Preschool as well as two busy churches. Two hundred metres down the road from my house is the day-care I walk my two year old to a few times a week and my nine month old will be going there next year as well. I'm a mum, a lawyer and I have an environmental science degree.

30 My husband and I were married in Sutton Forest during a COVID year. We moved to Moss Vale from Sydney. We tree changed because we chose to give our growing family a greener, healthier life than we could offer in Sydney. We thought we would be giving our future kids a better and healthier childhood. It seems we couldn't have been more mistaken and without wading too deeply into hyperbole, I am horrified at the potential future for my kids should Plasrefine be approved.

35 There are lots of problems with Plasrefine's amended proposal and honestly there are as many issues with the Department of Planning's assessment and recommendation. I can't go through them all and I am endeavouring to cover the most salient issues today in the time permitted.

40 At its most basic and most fundamental is the fact that the location of the Plasrefine plant is not the right site. It is plainly too close to houses and properties, too close to the Garvan Institute, too close to daycares, primary schools and high

5 schools and too close to small residential roads on which a hundred trucks are going to travel up and down, 7 am to 6 pm, five days a week, despite assurances otherwise. Whilst some of the routes are said to have changed, which might mean there is a few less trucks driving straight through the town of Moss Vale, all this has done has shift the burden to our neighbours in New Berrima.

10 Plastic facilities are known toxic fire risks. Plasrefine is simply too close to be safe for residents, for school kids and for the older population in the shire and there are simply not sufficient resources to properly or even adequately respond to the risk of fire. And like it's been said today, with a plastics recycling facility, it's not a matter of if a fire starts, but when. The toxicity of burning plastic, the release of volatile organic compounds will have significant far reaching impacts, much further afield than little old Moss Vale.

15 The Department's assessment of fire risk and Plasrefine's mitigation are both inadequate and dismissive. The Plasrefine site is too close to waterways and the Wingecarribee River feeds directly into the Sydney catchment. Others have already covered the total lack of information from Plasrefine and the total lack of infrastructure to deal with the micro and nanoplastic risk. In fact, the community is still on notice, waiting for a response to the meeting that were held, the public meetings that were held last year when we asked what filtration systems are going to be used. We still don't know.

25 I accept that there is no getting around the fact that we have years of backlogged plastics that needed a solution yesterday. I accept we've got too much plastic. We don't have enough room in landfill to deal with it all and I accept that the prospect of Plasrefine looks and feels to the government like a perfect solution to the big stinking mess that our failed recycling schemes have left us with and the fact we can no longer export our public waste. But dumping 120,000 tonnes of plastic waste a year on a small time because time is running out to meet a target by 2030 is simply not the answer and it's not the right site.

35 Experts will tell you that Australia needs to be moving away from plastics altogether and that the toxicity of plastic only increases by recycling. Plastics have no place in a circular economy despite the Department's assessment otherwise and it's clear that the only real solution to ending plastic pollution is to massively reduce production in the first place.

40 Plasrefine says they they're going to produce 105,000 tonnes each year of plastic flakes, plastic pellets, plastic powder, new plastic products like furniture, pallets and PET sheets. Burning plastic down or turning into other products makes the plastic more toxic, less stable, can't be recycled again, so off to landfill it all goes, only further contributing to our plastics problem. We drastically less plastic, not more.

45 It's very challenging for locals when the issues with the site have been explained from the outset and it is an enormous waste of everybody's time, energy and resource that we are all here today having this fight when the location is so plainly

wrong. However, I'm going to say it again and I'm going to say it for my kids in the hope that this time it is heard, Plasrefine, it's simply not the right site.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Natalie. In fairness to the people who have registered to speak after the afternoon break, we will take a break now a little earlier. We will resume at five to four, 3.55 and to take the afternoon session for the remaining speakers. Thank you.

### 10 **SHORT BREAK**

**MR MILLS:** We now continue submissions, and I'll ask Anna Phillips to come forward. Thank you.

15 **MS ANNA PHILLIPS:** Thank you, Commissioners. And I must say to have you here is beyond measure because originally this was going to be online, so thank you for coming to our community. My talk was water, precious water and that's what I'm drinking at the moment just there. In late 2021, I attended the first public information session presented by GHD consultants on behalf of Plasrefine. Whilst I do have extremely strong opinions regarding their competency, and I wasn't  
20 actually going to speak about that today, but I am just for a moment. If GHD had done the intense community engagement they are stating they've done, I ask you why in two weeks since we heard that this was going to the IPC, why are people in our community saying, "What are you talking about?"

25 So I know that we are here to talk about the DPHI document. So at this meeting that they presented us big ideas, glossy plans, and how fabulous Plasrefine was going to be for the war on the future of plastic recycling. After hearing about the proposed daily water usage required for the factory in 2021, which was estimated to be 40,000 litres per day and now in 2023 has been revised by GHD and  
30 Plasrefine to be about 15,500 litres per day, I addressed the question to GHD team. I stood up, I'll never forget it. "Where will all the water Plasrefine requires come from?" And this is the reply. "It will be sourced from rainwater tanks as part of the operation." My reply, "What if it doesn't rain?" No answer came. Seriously GHD and Plasrefine, how could such a corporation insult our intelligence with such an  
35 answer?

40 Here began my fight to stop Plasrefine, not the right site. In the current DPHI document consent in October 24, there is no mention of the amount of water that it would take from our portable water during a time of drought. This is rural land, and it is evident that at this time in 2021, our community had more knowledge about the rain cycle than GHD. El Nino is now unfortunately part of our future forecast weather and dry drought cycles will continue over the decades ahead. At the beginning of 2020, 100 per cent of New South Wales was in drought. The overall message from the new modelling is that our water supplies in New South  
45 Wales could be less secure than we thought. Our weather is now unpredictable and unstable. Then you also have catastrophic fires, sadly, as the Southern Highlands had in the summer of 2019 and 2020.

What fights bushfires? Water is one. I have asked the question recently, “Who gets priority over our town water at times of water restrictions?” And it is my belief industry does. I also ask, “Who will monitor the proposed usage of this water by Plasrefine?” It is stated in the current proposal in mitigation that Plasrefine would be engaging with our community to manage issues such as these. I say, “No way.”  
5 As a rate payer and a resident of the Southern Highlands, I would have absolutely nothing to do with a company with zero experience in plastic recycling.  
[Redacted]. What GHD and Plasrefine have made this amazing community endure over the past four years has taken its personal toll, especially the extreme distress  
10 on those people that live nearby.

As of last Monday, we rallied 400 people that didn't know about this and they're here now and that is what I say. This is not the right site. This is a high risk high – it must not happen. It's not the right site. Everything needs water. Bees need  
15 water. Humans need water. Animals need water. This is a tourist destination. People come here for our green scapes, they come to tulip time. We are known as the most beautiful green place one hour from Sydney. That is all at risk because of water. If we can't use it, if I can't drink it.

I for one, I am a food educator of 40 years. I encourage people to grow their own produce. I won't be able to do that as if I'm going to grow something and ingest more plastic because I'm already going to be ingesting it. And lastly, on Monday the 14th of October, I had an opportunity to speak to our Premier Chris Minns on live ABC radio and he didn't actually know when I mentioned the word  
25 Plasrefine. He asked me at the end of the process, “Trust the process.” That was the end of my call with Premier Chris Minns. Well, what I've heard today, I say “Trust what process?” I am so proud of this community that has rallied in these past two weeks, and this is not the right site. The only thing necessary for triumph of crime of Plasrefine is for good people to do nothing.

30 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Shardae Ewart? No? Okay. Would Bronwyn Tregenza be here?

35 **MS BRONWYN TREGENZA:** Okay, I've just got to get a little closer. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm Bronwyn Tregenza. I live in Mittagong. Plastic manufacturing involves highly toxic substances, but the poisons involved in plastic recycling are far worse. Plastics are made from naphtha, a distillate of crude oil. The Fluid Catalytic Cracking Handbook published in 2012 explains  
40 naphtha is a mixture of compounds, some of which are used as paint thinners, dry cleaning solvents and motor vehicle fuel.

They're environmental contaminants and the catalysts in the plastic production process are even more potent, persistent and damaging. But that's just the tip of the toxicity iceberg. You see, plastics for recycling have had a vast array of other  
45 chemicals added to modify their properties to make them more flexible, sterile and UV resistant. The United Nations released a technical report last year called Chemicals in Plastics. Over 13,000 additional chemicals were identified in plastics and 3,200 of these chemicals are identified as being of major concern due to their

high toxicity and potential to migrate.

They include flame retardants, UV stabilisers, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. That's PFAS. Phthalates, bisphenols, alkylphenols, alkylphenol ethoxylates, biocides, metals and metalloids, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and many others which the UN describes as NIAS, non-intentionally added substances. Poisonous things we now believe should never have been added to plastics if we intended to recycle them. The UN report states that – and these are their words, not mine. “Women and children are particularly susceptible to these toxic chemicals. Exposures can have severe or long-lasting adverse effects. Exposures during foetal development and in children can cause neurodevelopmental and neurobehavioral disorders.” This information is from the United Nations. Surely it cannot be ignored. So let's just look at one of the 3,200 hazardous chemicals likely to be released in Moss Vale during plastic recycling. Bisphenol A, BPA.

A study by [Mafini(?) 07:27:42] et al from Tufts University Medical School in Boston released in 2006 called Endocrine Disruptors and Reproductive Health, The case of bisphenol A. In the peer-reviewed journal, Molecular and Cellular Endocrinology states that – and again, their words not mine. “The oestrogen mimic bisphenol A is an agent for endocrine disruption. BPA is used in the manufacturer of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy. Perinatal exposure to BPA results in morphological and functional alterations of the male and female genital tract and mammary glands that predisposes the tissue to earlier onset of disease, reduced fertility and mammary and prostate cancer. Bisphenol A is a crystalline solid and it will dissolve in some solvents.” There are such strict rules for wastewater in our Shire because of our special place within the Sydney Water catchment. I feel like I'm in a dystopian nightmare where a dictatorial state government would override our local council as they seek to prevent that harm.

A study by [Sigh(?) 07:29:03] et al in the peer-reviewed journal Chemosphere examined the emissions from 10 plastic recycling plants both inside and at the boundary of those properties. They found – and their words. “The melting and powdering processes for treating plastic waste generates harmful gas emissions which have potential adverse health impacts for nearby residents. Multiple organochlorinated compounds were measurable in the ambient air emitted from the plastic waste recycling plants. These gaseous emissions are large, heavy molecules. They will drift low and not just float away.”

The Plasrefine site is 1.7 kilometres from St. Paul's Catholic Primary school, 1.6 kilometres as the crow flies from Argyle Street, 1.7 kilometres from Moss Vale High and just metres from scores of residential homes and a childcare centre. Will you Andrew, Janett, and Clare risk the health and fertility of our children, our friends and our neighbours by locating Plasrefine in this specific site or will you ask Plasrefine to relocate away from schools, homes and the town main street and outside the Sydney Water catchment.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Is Colin Tyson available? Anne Cubban?

**MS ANNE CUBBAN:** Yes. Okay. Thank you for listening to me and to my submission. Those before me that spoke before me, many, many researched. I'm sorry I didn't do the research. I'm just an average person, an average resident of Southern Highlands and I feel passionate about this. Thank you. Thank you. I cannot add anything new to what has already been said, but I'm just a voice amongst the many, but I want my voice heard. Okay, thank you.

As a proud resident of Southern Highlands, I wish, and I should be allowed to live here free of potential health issues and happy in the knowledge that my children and my grandchildren are not in harm's way. So I say no to Plasrefine. There is an overwhelming evidence that microplastics are responsible for declining human health. They are responsible for the long-term health issues such as infertility. Will we be dooming our future generations?

Having this facility here at Moss Vale at the proposed site will bring air and noise pollution from the many trucks and machineries operating 24/7. I know you said seven until six, but no one believes that. Not to mention the damage to the roads from the very large trucks transporting vast quantities of plastic. These microplastics cling to the trucks and are spread into the air as they travel to their next destination. And if the facility solution to this is to hose down the trucks before leaving, how much of our precious water will this use? How much of that microplastic will be washed down into our waterways, rivers and dams? How will our native fauna, like our platypus survive these pollutants? So many questions with no satisfactory answers. Fire risk is another issue with having this facility at this proposed site. As all factories have a very real threat of fire, no matter how many safety features they put into place.

Can our three fire stations and rural fire service be able to deal with a large chemical fire of this magnitude? Not to mention the risks to the firefighters as they may not be equipped to handle this type of chemical fire. The beauty of this clean region is what attracted me, my husband, my children, and their families to move to this region. If this facility goes ahead at the proposed site, this region will be damaged beyond repair. Roads, air, waterways, noise, traffic and the August winds will be so much more dangerous. Lastly, my daughter, her husband, and their young children live less than a kilometre from the proposed site. Are these facilities even allowed to be this close to residential areas? No.

My understanding is if this facility such as the one proposed is to be 3.5 kilometres away from residential areas. Well the stats are in, there are numerous residential homes less than 3.5 kilometres away as well as early childhood centres, sporting facilities, playgrounds, and educational centres. This is not the right site. I myself do not want to see my grandchildren be the collateral damage from this evidence-based pollutants that this facility will bring to not only my family but all the families in this region. Please do not let this facility go ahead. This is not the right site. Thank you for listening.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Anne. Pip Frecklington?

**MS PIP FRECKLINGTON:** Good afternoon, Mr Chairman and Commissioners of the IPC. Thank you for the opportunity to address the panel today. My name is Pip Frecklington. I have over 20 years' experience assessing highly complex and contentious development applications on behalf of government. I'm also an expert member on a number of local and regional planning panels as well as an infrastructure gateway expert reviewer in New South Wales and South Australia.

I'm addressing you today on behalf of Annie Cannon-Brookes. We are the owner of a cluster of conservation commercial farmland, zoned C3 environmental management, to the north and northeast of the site with the closest boundary only 1,200 metres from the subject site. The purpose of my address today is twofold. One to point out a number of shortcomings in the Department's assessment report and recommended conditions of consent. And secondly, to request a further two week extension to the written submission deadline until the 25th of November. I would like to begin by unpacking a number of shortcomings in the Department's report.

Number one, the Department's evaluation of the proposal against section 4.15 of the Act is inadequate in its assessment of the proposal's likely impacts, site suitability and the public interest. The report has identified the key issues with the application as social, visual, impacts on the ABR and operational traffic. There is a clear omission of health and environmental impacts which are key issues. The assessment of site suitability in Appendix D determines that the site is suitable for the proposed development based on the use being permissible with no further assessment. In my expert opinion, the proposal will unduly restrict the development potential of future employment generating land uses within the Southern Highlands Innovation Park as well as development on adjoining C4RU2 and RU4 zoned land to the south. In this regard, the proposal will not promote the orderly development of land as required under Object C of the Act.

The traffic impact assessment has not considered the cumulative impact of projected traffic volumes based on future development of the Innovation Park. Transport for New South Wales also notes this in its final response dated 13th of November 2024. In this regard, the proposal has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed development will not adversely impact upon the efficient operation of the local and regional road system, which is a clear objective of the E4 zone.

The report basis its conclusion that the proposed is in the public interest on job creation and the mitigation of environmental impacts through conditions of consent. Given the strong public opposition to the proposal and potential environmental, social, health and economic impacts, this is woefully inadequate. A further omission from the applicant's EIS and the Department's report is consideration of the impact on fresh food production, on agricultural lands surrounding the Innovation Park and the promotion of agribusiness in the Southern Highlands.

This is a clear objective of the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020 to

2030 and is a relevant consideration in the assessment of site suitability. The site suitability assessment should also consider the clear intent for the newly rebranded Southern Highlands Innovation Park as a research and advance manufacturing and biotech precinct. The proposal is at odds with this.

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The Department's report frequently uses the term "unlikely to have" as an acceptable benchmark for assessing environmental impacts. This is unacceptable based on the magnitude of risk and consequence of this proposal. Definitive conclusions based on a rigorous assessment is required. The report contains no detailed analysis of the principles of ecologically sustainable development as required under section 4.15 of the Act. The Department's conclusion justifies the proposal on the basis of job creation, contribution towards the State's waste recovery targets and that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the local environment.

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The conclusion should reaffirm the precise impacts based on a robust assessment of rigorous scientific research in order to properly evaluate the merits of the proposal. Concluding comments. To conclude, the Department's report based on the information at hand and lack of resolution of key matters through the imposition of conditions of consent lacks the degree of robustness warranted by a proposal of this magnitude and consequence.

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Finally, we respectfully ask a further two weeks extension to the written submission deadline until the 25th of November. This request is made on the basis that despite being only 1,200 metres from the subject property, we were not notified of the application. It is important that we understand the impacts fully, based on scientific and factual evidence. And the purpose of this additional time is to engage the appropriate subject matter experts to undertake a peer review of the EIS that would form part of our submission.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Dianna Porter?

**MS DIANNA PORTER:** A bit closer? Hello everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Dianna Porter and I'm a resident of Moss Vale and have lived in the Highlands for about 12 years. Some of the information that I'm going to present today has probably been repeated, but it comes from a literature review of 2023 on hazard identification relating to fire safety in commercial plastic recycling facilities. I think one of the biggest concerns for this facility is that when there is a fire, it will be a huge environmental disaster that will impact our health and environment for generations. Plastic recycling facilities are generally zoned Heavy Industrial E5. This is because of the high level of environmental disasters and fires and therefore they require a large buffer zone between other industries and residential areas. And of more concern is the fact that we don't have the resources in this Shire to fight this specific type of fire in a timely manner.

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Moss Vale Fire Station being an unmanned voluntary station. In the whole Shire, we have only I think four trucks, one hazmat, with other hazmat vehicles about an



hour of distance. We just don't have the resources here. This is not the right site. The most commonly recycled plastics are PET and high-density polyethylene. These types of thermoplastics are ideal for recycling as they can be softened, melted, reshaped, and hardened by cooling, but this needs extremely high temperatures. Hence the high incidents of fires in plastic recycling facilities. Firefighters state that these fires are extremely difficult to extinguish because of the [unintelligible 07:44:06] release rate, often over 1,000 degrees centigrade. Additionally, the [unintelligible 07:44:12] of plastic waste in bales high heat release rate as well.

Plasrefine documents state that there will be a sprinkler system installed only in building one. There is no detail about this system, and I think that building two, which is designated for reprocessing should also have a sprinkler system. Both of these systems should be what they call in rack sprinkler systems. These are a network of pipes which are used in taller storage buildings with high hazard commodities, and they continuously monitor for smoke, and they release water to targeted areas for a quick response. If there was only a ceiling sprinkler system, burning or smouldering plastic at the top of a stack will harden as the water cools it and this will form a plastic shield making water penetration to the lower smouldering areas impossible. Another source of fires is what they call combustible dust cloud formation, which is a byproduct of the shredding process. The heat friction from the shredding machines and this dust combines to cause fires.

As building two will probably not contain combustible waste, however, it will contain combustible materials, and they will be using very high temperatures for moulding to end products. These temperatures are 340 to 440 degrees centigrade with the potential to cause nearby materials to ignite. This building, number two, also needs fire and smoke detection and in rack sprinkler systems. The fire load density of a plastic recycling plant is 10 times higher than a plastic manufacturing facility and five times higher than a paint manufacturing facility.

While we are having a parliamentary inquiry into the levels of PFAS in our drinking water in New South Wales, is this the right time to approve this facility in the Sydney Water catchment area? It is not the right site. The United Nations stated in 2022 that it is a fundamental human right to clean healthy air and a sustainable environment and this must be protected. The New South Wales government needs to recognise our rights. They were already legislated last year in the ACT, mapping the way forward for the other states. This is not the right site. Thank you.

**MS SUZI BRYANT:** Okay. My name is Suzi Bryant, and I live in Moss Vale, and I am up here proposing that this is not the right site. Moss Vale is a vibrant and beautiful town that many families call home. I am a very active member of the Moss Vale community, being a buyer's agent and both the president of the Moss Vale High School Parents and Citizens Club and the vice president of the Moss Vale Public School Parents and Citizens Club. So I speak on behalf of myself, my three children and the 1,500 children that I am also responsible for.

5 The high school has shot up 200 places to be the top regional school in New South  
Wales for HSC and many families now want to live in Moss Vale to be in the  
catchment area for the school. So we are currently seeing a boom for people  
wanting to live in Moss Vale. Moss Vale is a growing community. It has been  
earmarked for an additional 3,000 homes and it is happy to welcome these 6,000  
or so residents into its fold. We are a community who is happy to be growing, who  
is making allowances for the additional families, and this is completely at odds  
with introducing toxic heavy industry right into the town. This recycling plant  
10 should not be allowed to be established at the proposed site. Australia needs to  
manage its soft plastic, but it is a toxic industry, and it should not be running near  
people or water catchment areas.

15 Research shows that this method of recycling plastics increases microplastics,  
which creates air and water pollution. It has been documented and peer-reviewed  
that microplastics have an impact on the hormone development of children and  
cause hormonal induced cancer. On behalf of the 1,500 kids that I represent, I say  
that the Plasrefine site should not be built in the proposed location so close to the  
town. The current location is 600 metres from the closest childcare centre, a  
20 childcare centre my children went to. This centre has a lovely garden in which  
children play and at that age playing involves putting everything in their mouths.  
The garden and the air they will breathe will be full of microplastics. The high  
school, the local primary school, multiple childcare centres and two private  
schools are all within two and a half kilometres of the site. Two more schools are  
25 within five kilometres.

We know microplastics impact the hormone development of children. So I ask you  
why would we build a site so close to a town and so close to a childcare centre and  
schools? In addition to the existing town, Moss Vale is creating a Southern  
30 Highlands Innovation Park in the land surrounding the Plasrefine site. This will  
bring in extra families and a range of employment, valuable employment in  
biotech and research, which will make Moss Vale a hub of leading-edge  
development.

35 This is something New South Wales needs, new ideas and strong regional centres  
that people actually want to live in. Having a toxic heavy industry right in the  
middle of this will not attract businesses or families. It is mad to build a plastics  
recycling site right in a town. It is also mad to build a recycling plant in the  
Sydney Water catchment area. It is documented that the site will have a leakage of  
40 wastewater and it's 10 metres away from a riverine that is a part of the Sydney  
catchment area.

45 If you drive five minutes down the road, down the way water flows, you will find  
platypus. Plastic recycling is heavy industry, and this wastewater will contain  
chemicals and microplastics. This wastewater will be going into the river, which  
will then go into Sydney's drinking water. By approving a recycling facility in this  
location, the state government is knowingly a hundred per cent eyes open, fully  
aware of what they are doing, implementing a heavy industry right in the middle

of the Sydney Water catchment area where they know, a hundred per cent know, that this will put microplastics into the drinking water supply. We know that microplastics have an impact on the hormone development of children and cause hormonal induced cancer. Why would we introduce that facility right here where it can do so much damage? Plasrefine does not make sense in this location, the residential houses right next door, the schools, the growing population and the water catchment area are all sound reasons to find a different site.

The Goulburn member has committed to finding a suitable location for this recycling plant, which might be in the Southern Highlands but not in this location. I applaud the state government for implementing a plastics recycling facility and am myself a strong supporter of recycling. Moving the location of the recycling facility will take time and I know getting a plastics refinery up and running is important, but putting it in the heart of the Sydney Water catchment area right up against a thriving town near over 3,000 school students is madness. I state that this is not the right site and any government or committee who approves this is destroying a vibrant and growing community and is actively poisoning Sydney's water supply. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Suzi. I'm just going to check is Shardae Ewart here with us? Well, Okay. Sharan Kennedy? Colin Tyson? Garth Phillips?

**MR GARTH PHILLIPS:** Is that better? Anna is going to stand here with me because I've rehearsed this and I break down all the time, so if I can't finish reading it, Anna will finish my session. Good afternoon. Firstly, thank you for making the time to come to the Southern Highlands and allowing the community to have a public meeting with the IPC. My name is Garth Phillips. I'm here today as a stressed member of the Moss Vale community. There are so many negatives to this proposed project, both environmentally and morally. The water, including Sydney's drinking water will be contaminated with microplastics. The animals, both nocturnal and diurnal will be adversely affected.

When there is a hazardous fire, there will not be enough suitable resources to fight a fire immediately. Equipment will need to come from Campbelltown 45 minutes away. And as we've heard today, the list goes on. The submitted application proposal has lacked transparency, proper detail and truthfulness. So many questions have been unanswered. [Redacted. It is reported that the applicant does not have the funds to build the factory if it is approved. They are relying on the Australian government to fund the project by way of grants. If this is a democracy we live in, how could the government justify millions to one party when so many groups, individuals have demonstrated they are against the project?

It would be very interesting to have seen how the Chris Minns government would've handled these objections if the Highlands were swinging Labor seats. I could go on with a long list of why this is the wrong site. A real concern of mine is if the factory is approved, who will be held accountable in the future five, 10, 20 years from now when large amounts of money are required to repair roads damaged by Plasrefine trucks constantly using them? Who is going to be

accountable when we go into another once in a hundred year drought and we can't supply Goulburn and other areas with safe drinking water from the Wingecarribee River? I know this is a classic "not in my backyard" situation. The thing is the decision of the IPC is going to affect a bloody large backyard.

5

The effect this proposal has had on my family and the stress it has caused for the past four years is immeasurable. I cherish the day the IPC let us know that the project has not been approved. We can get on with our lives, stop talking about Plasrefine, and continue to live in this beautiful area. Finally, I urge from the bottom of my heart and with all my soul that the IPC hear the people, make the decision that this is not the right site.

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To Nancy, you need to consider your position in the court of public opinion that has been voiced here today. One thought on finishing, can I ask you all on the panel when you are in a quiet moment of contemplation of your decision, you hold this little voice in your head saying, "Nothing's fine with Plasrefine. This is not the right site." I'll say it again. Nothing's fine with Plasrefine. This is not the right site. Again, thank you for your time and the opportunity to voice my concerns.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Garth. Kylie Roberts-Frost?

**MS KYLIE ROBERTS-FROST:** Good afternoon, members of the Commission, traditional owners, councillors and community attendees. I'm a resident of the Southern Highlands with three young children and I'm speaking as a concerned member of that community. However, I want to highlight my background includes 20 years in supply chain across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and I'm currently the CEO of an authorised stewardship scheme for one of the federal government's declared problem waste products. That role requires me to authorise and audit 10 recycling sites across Australia and I've previously managed a recycling site in the ACT on behalf of ACT No Waste. It's that experience which informs my concern over the site proposal currently under review. Sorry, I just rushed in from picking up my daughter, so I'm still puffed.

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I believe that the environmental impact assessment and State Significant Development Report have not addressed key elements to a level that allow the IPC to make a recommendation on this project. I believe that if the IPC were to approve this application, it would be open to challenge given the lack of supporting data around some of the claims within those reports. While I have concerns around numerous elements within those reports, including a lack of formal consultation with Gundungurra traditional owners, today I am focusing on the inadequacies of the fire risk assessment and plans. I want to be very clear that I fully support projects of this nature. Recycling is how we deal with design flaws of the past and it's a crucial element of our transition to a circular economy. My concern is around the location of this facility. It is not the right site.

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We have a very unique opportunity here, but we are looking at an exceptionally high risk location for Australia's largest plastics recycling operation. This is a site that is five times bigger than any other plastics facility in the country, with a

boundary buffer to residences that is the narrowest in Australia. It is located next to the Garvan Institute. An organisation that's medical testing supports not just Australia but the world. In essence, it's irreplaceable. No matter how advanced the facility and robust the processes, there is always a risk of fires.

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The ACT's only materials recovery facility located in Hume was destroyed two years ago. That's why similar projects operate in appropriate industrial areas with adequate exclusion zones. The Hume fire alone clearly demonstrates to me the lack of serious assessment around the fire risk within the EIS and SSD. On Boxing Day in 2022, a fire ignited on the site that escalated rapidly. Within two response units were alerted and dispatched with the first truck arriving within six minutes.

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Within 12 minutes, three more arrived. And another three four minutes after that. Aerial support arrived within 28 minutes. 32 minutes after that 000 call, despite efforts from a total of 18 units and aerial support, crews had to adopt a defensive strategy to protect the surrounding site of which my facility was one. The fire's intensity ultimately consumed that facility, with a declared loss 48 minutes after the 000 call.

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The fire safety plan in this proposal suggests that three trucks stationed across the Highlands would suffice this containment until reinforcements could arrive from Campbelltown or Goulburn at earliest 50 minutes later. This is manifestly untrue, inadequate, and there is no evidence to support the claims of that nature made in this proposal. The Hume fire occurred in a secure industrial area distant from residences and nowhere near a daycare. This proposal suggests that a 90 metre buffer from residence boundaries and 50 metres from a highly vulnerable and significant research facility is appropriate.

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The storage proposal allows for 20,000 tonnes of plastics to be stored on site. There was 150 tonnes on the site at Hume when it was engulfed with such ferocity in 30 minutes and took four days to bring under control. What would 20,000 tonnes do and where is that appropriately and adequately addressed within these assessments? This facility has immense potential but not at this site and I do not believe the IPC can recommend based on the current levels of details within the assessments. I also suggest that a more appropriate location exists that is safer and in harmony with our community needs.

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Eight kilometres up the road is the heavy industrial zone identified in both the Moss Vale economic plan and the SHIP. These sites have direct access to the Hume Highway and provide a minimum two kilometre buffer from residences, rather than 200 metres. Aside from the IPC process we are engaging in today, I suggest to our leaders, our community, and Ms Zheng that we have all the right people in this room to start discussions on how to get this facility in the right place where it can provide the services that our state and country so desperately need at a scale and location that are appropriate for the risk these operations bring.

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**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Kylie. The next speaker, Morgan Kernow. Is Morgan here?

**MS MORGAN KERNOW:** Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Morgan Kernow, and I have been living in Moss Vale for three and a half years. I came here in order to live closer to my daughter and her family, which are three  
5 grandchildren. I would like to thank members of the IPC panel for giving the community the opportunity to present to you our reactions to the proposed Plasrefine project. I should declare at this point that I am very much an optimist, although that's been tested recently.

10 I firmly believe that not only is Plasrefine's proposed site not the right site for their recycling facility, but I also believe strongly that this is not the right time for a plastic recycling facility to be built. So why have I come to this conclusion? Firstly, it seems to me that putting a facility such as this in the middle of the designated SHIP precinct in Moss Vale would be beyond foolish. Sensitive  
15 scientific research and a 24/7 noisy industrial recycling facility with several hundred truck movements – or several truck movements a day would make totally incompatible bedfellows.

20 And I hadn't even heard of the mice before the last couple of days, so that'd be even worse. Plasrefine's arrival would mean the death knell of the SHIP dream. Instead of a modern research group, we would have what amounts to a dinosaur, a white elephant in our midst. Now why do I say that? The consensus of much of the scientific community is that plastic recycling in Australia is lagging behind that of other developed countries. In fact, current plastic recycling is considered by many  
25 to be a mature industry. And what this means, it's past its prime, kind of like me. And that in all probability, new ideas with new energy, new enthusiasm, and above all new science are champing at the bit to take its place. In the years taken to build a Plasrefine facility, if it's allowed to go ahead, who knows what new possibilities will emerge. For example, a group of scientists at the University of  
30 Wollongong have published a peer-reviewed paper discussing their success in developing biodegradable plastic. Imagine that. It does sound impossible, but they have done it. So we are at the beginning of a potential new era in plastic recycling.

35 You can bet your bottom dollar that this has been picked up by research groups around the world who will not rest until it becomes a realisable option, freely available. Scientists are like that. They're really keen to progress things. In the meantime, imagine if Plasrefine had gone ahead and built the proposed facility with its chemical laid in wastewater, its legacy of countless millions of  
40 microparticles finding their way into our waterways, our water catchments, our water supplies, our crops, our bodies and those of our animals. Resulting in, for example, the death of our treasured platypus habitats just a short distance away. The as yet largely unknown negative effects on our health, the health and development of our children and so on. It does not bear thinking of. For the cruel  
45 joke is that plastic recycling as it is currently carried out, does not remove one iota, not one nanoparticle of plastic from our world.

Instead, plastic is broken down into ever smaller particles, microparticles, which we cannot smell, taste, or see, free to do their damndest to life as we know it. So

if the Plasrefine project is allowed to go ahead, to work 24/7 to produce these microparticles with their as yet not fully understood negative effects on the planet. And if after say 10 years or so, maybe even less, plastic recycling can take that giant leap, that paradigm shift, so that total plastic can in fact be reduced rather than processed into ever smaller particles. And then if we'd gone ahead with the Plasrefine facility, what would be likely to happen to that? Well, it would remain. Pumping out its microplastics with their legacy of destruction, gradually declining into a dismal ghost to scare small children at bedtime. Assuming then that there are families with small children still in Moss Vale, how much better would it be to take the bold step of not allowing the facility to be built in the first place? Say no to Plasrefine I beg of you. Thank you for listening.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Morgan. I'll just do a check again. Has Shardae Ewart arrived or Colin Tyson? Thank you. Jane Aylen? Not yet. Tamara Facer? Yes, I know. I appreciate that. You have all been so well organised that the two minutes we allow between speakers has not been used. So thank you for that in one sense. It has made it a little difficult. Derek White?

**MR DEREK WHITE:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioners and concerned citizens of the Wingecarribee Shire. I'm giving this presentation as a representative of WinZero, the go-to organisation on environmental matters in our Shire with a mission to protect and enhance what green between we have left in the Highlands. We have 80 plus members and over 800 social media followers in our organisation. And in this matter, I espouse the views of the overwhelming majority of them.

I have to say at the outset that we have absolutely no objection to plastic recycling in principle. It's essential to deal with the mountain of such material cast off by a wasteful society and unless and until we drastically reduce our usage of plastic across the board, we'll have to do something with it. I do however strongly maintain that without a shadow of a doubt this is absolutely the wrong place to put such a facility, and I'll try to explain why we think that is not the right site.

I intend to focus on three areas, the paucity of operational details provided by the proponent and its consultants, the strategic plan for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, otherwise known as a SHIP, and the very doubtful economics of the project. I come to this as a mining engineer with nearly 50 years of experience in the industry, much of it in project assessment and project development in Australia and overseas.

I was for some time the project development manager for a listed mining company, and I supervised the lodgement of an EIS for a silver project in Central Western New South Wales, during which I managed up to 30 consultants and spent nearly \$5 million of the shareholders' money in the process. Therefore, I feel qualified to say that the assessment and approval process for Plasrefine leaves a lot to be desired. In fact, I have never seen any project in my working life that has had so many red flags attached to it and yet still gets recommended for approval by the Department of Planning.

Key issues are in the mining project I referred to, we would never have been allowed to get away with such a general process description as that presented here. No detailed equipment description and or specification, no analysis of the likely feed materials, chemical additives or implant material flows. No detailing of the likely flue gas streams and resulting emissions or dust management, et cetera, et cetera. And you've heard a lot of those here today, I'm sure.

We had to engage a process engineering firm to do a plant design that would allow us to size equipment and specify its performance to enable us to assess infrastructure needs, especially the likely power draws, process water requirements and waste and effluent streams and quantities, as well as qualities. We then had to do an in-depth risk assessment of the project and present robust prevention or mitigation strategies for at least the higher probability and higher seriousness items. I have seen little sign of any of such assessment in the Plasrefine documentation. Therefore, I'm at a total loss to understand how Planning and other departments can make a reasonable assessment without such details. There are far too many examples of "she'll be right on the night mate", on the apparent assumption that a proponent with absolutely no track record in the industry will be able to work all this out in a timely and effective manner starting from ground zero.

My main concern on the infrastructure front is the power supply. My enquiries to the grid operator Endeavour Energy suggest that while they're working on upgrading the size of the feed system to the SHIP, they have had no definitive discussions with Plasrefine regarding their actual needs, which is not surprising given the paucity of information. What if there is not enough power supply for Plasrefine, let alone for any other existing and or new SHIP occupants? What happens then?

The second big overall problem I have with the project is the incompatibility of a plant like Plasrefine with the stated objectives of the Wingecarribee Shire overarching master plan for the SHIP and the Wingecarribee local environment plan or LEP. WinZero has worked closely with the council strategic planning team to develop the best possible outcome in the SHIP, both for the Shire as a whole as well as nearby residents and other SHIP occupants.

The focus has been on low impact, innovative and regenerative industries, educational and research establishments and other light industrial operations like the current data centre and the bio research facility. It certainly doesn't envisage a potentially hazardous and polluting operation like Plasrefine. How and why can the state government ignore the desires of the council and the local community by recommending such a project? Particularly as the State provided significant funding to the council to facilitate the drafting of the aforesaid master plan. Finally, the economics of the project. I'm afraid I can't be definitive in my statements on this due to the lack of information available, but I have serious doubts there can ever be an economic business for a number of reasons. Given the plant design is so sketchy and recent construction cost escalation so high, the base



cost will be significantly higher in the end than the original guesstimate of \$88 million.

5 All of the constraints that are likely to be placed on the operation by the  
outstanding infrastructure needs and the likely conditions of any approval will  
undoubtedly escalate both capital and operating cost. The market in Australia for  
the likely products is very limited, so a significant portion will have to be shipped  
overseas if not dumped. Because of the seemingly indecent haste to get this project  
approved, there is no time for us to get an expert analysis done of the business  
10 case, even if we had enough information.

However, in my professional opinion, even if a large government subsidies are  
available to this project, it is highly likely to fail in the not too distant future and  
thus be an enduring blot on the SHIP landscape. In conclusion, I urge you  
15 Commissioners not to approve this project for three reasons. The inadequacy of  
the application and the assessment process, the likelihood of an early closure due  
to poor economics and its complete incompatibility with the objectives of the  
Wingecarribee LEP and the council's master plan for the SHIP. I urge you, please  
don't sink our SHIP. Thank you very much.

20 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Derek. Would Louise Keats be here?

**MS LOUISE KEATS:** Thank you. Good afternoon, members of the Commission.  
Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Louise Keats. I'm an author and a  
25 health writer with grave concerns about this development. My key concern is the  
catastrophic microplastic pollution from this facility. We know from extensive  
research that plastic recycling contributes massive quantities of microplastics to  
the surrounding environment.

30 In the case of a UK plastics recycling plant that scientists assessed last year, the  
microplastics released into waste water amounted to 13 per cent of the total plastic  
processed. Introducing a filtration system was unable to stop this pollution. It only  
reduced the figure to 6 per cent, which still amounted to over 1,000 tonnes of  
wastewater pollution a year. There were also high levels of microplastics in the  
35 surrounding air. Shockingly, this state of the art facility was described as a best  
case scenario with the researchers noting that other recycling facilities may be far  
worse polluters.

40 Next slide please. Closer to home, Australian scientists have recently shone a light  
on the shockingly high level of microplastic pollution caused by recycling. With a  
2023 study estimating up to 1,972, tonnes of microplastics are generated by  
recycling in this country each year and over 3 million tonnes globally. If Plasrefine  
goes ahead, this Australian figure will be exponentially higher. Exactly why are  
microplastics so concerning? Next slide please.

45 Firstly, they are bio accumulative. What this means is they don't just pass through  
our bodies, they stay there, and they keep building up. They have only so recently  
been found to accumulate in every organ in the human body, including our lungs,

liver, bone marrow, reproductive systems and brain. They've even been found in placenta and breast milk, so our babies are being exposed to them from the very start of their life. Research is now starting to find links between microplastic accumulation and a wide range of concerning health problems including cancer, asthma, lung disease, liver disease, and infertility.

Next slide. However, it's the impact on the brain that's the most disturbing. A 2024 US study has revealed that the brain is a super accumulator of microplastics with up to 20 times more microplastics found in the brain than other organs. Worse still, microplastics seem to be playing a leading role in neurodegenerative disease like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. The same study revealed that brains of people who died from dementia had 10 times more microplastics than healthy brains. Recent research has also shown that the human brain is now 0.5 per cent microplastics. That's one heaped teaspoon of plastic in an average adult brain. What's also striking is that human brain samples from 2024 had about 50 per cent more plastic than brain samples from 2016. This trend mirrors the rising level of microplastics found in the environment, suggesting that as plastic pollution increases, so does the plastic accumulation in our organs. Next slide please.

Here you can see some images of microplastic shards in our human tissue, and once it's there, it never leaves. It's not just the microplastics themselves, it's the chemicals they carry. Plastics act as vectors for damaging chemicals like BPA and the PFAS forever chemicals we're hearing so much about now. These substances leach out and accumulate alongside microplastics in the body, increasing our cancer risk and causing damage to our hormones, thyroid and cognition. Plasrefine initially told us during their community engagement sessions that there would be virtually no opportunity for microplastics to escape from their buildings. However, we know from the excellent Australian and international research in this area that this cannot possibly be true. While air and water filters can be effective at trapping larger plastic particles, it is the smaller invisible nano plastics that are prone to escaping filtration, and it is these that are most devastating to human health.

If we end up with a best case scenario and only a small fraction of the total plastic processed makes its way into our environment. Given the enormous scale of Plasrefine's operation, this will still amount to thousands of tonnes of microplastics in our air and waterways each year. These microplastics are invisible and all of you in this room, it's critical that you understand that you and your families will definitely be breathing and drinking them, and they will definitely make their way into your organs where they will stay.

And those of you from Sydney, it's critical that you realise that you will also be drinking them along with the PFAS forever chemicals that they carry. If Australia wishes to embrace plastics recycling, governments need to be extremely judicious about where these facilities are located. Crucially, they should be a great many kilometres away from farming, residence, schools, and especially waterways like ours that lead to Sydney's catchment. Placing a facility here would be a crime against our environment and our children and the people of Sydney for countless generations to come. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you. Sharan Kennedy? She's here.

**MS SHARAN KENNEDY:** Good evening, Commissioners and good evening  
5 community members and visitors. The three areas of concern that I wish to address  
this evening are fire, emissions and lighting. On Christmas Eve 2020, several  
Moss Vale residents received devastating news via a letterbox drop. Tucked inside  
a plain white envelope was notification of a proposal that would ultimately change  
10 their lives, to establish an enormous plastics recycling factory literally on their  
doorstep. These sensitive receivers, as they've been constantly referred to in GHD  
documents, were not only shocked but also devastated. And with no immediate  
recourse over the Christmas break due to holiday closures, those residents were  
left beyond desperate for clarification –

15 Lost my place. Where are we? Sorry – and information not immediately available.  
And so began our four year David and Goliath battle against the establishment of a  
totally inappropriate facility on a site, which despite its zoning, has for years  
retained an essentially rural residential aspect. The proposed site is less than 200  
metres from homes, only 90 metres from a recently approved new home  
20 subdivision with many of the closest residents having lived there their entire lives  
in that area.

It's considerably closer to businesses without any effective buffer zone, apart from  
25 proposed mounds and trees, and it's proposing to operate 24/7. Within a mere 62  
metres proximity is the Australian Bio Resources, ABR Garvan Institute, an  
internationally recognised medical facility researching cures for a vast variety of  
diseases and conditions. To place such an important life-saving institution at risk  
is beyond reprehensible. Plasrefine has become the Christmas present that keeps  
30 on giving.

The fact that IN1, general industrial zoning, now E4, exists for that specific area  
and therefore allows such a proposal to be considered, does in no way make it  
appropriate for that area. Particularly in the light of council's draft design for the  
SHIP, Southern Highlands Innovation Park. This is a community supported, and  
35 state government funded initiative to establish facilities within the SHIP which  
will promote and foster such enterprises as education, technology, innovation,  
employment opportunities, et cetera.

40 It should not be placed at extreme risk of failure to accommodate an unwanted  
plastics recycling industry that should by rights be reclassified as either heavy  
industry or even hazardous. Due to the chemicals used in cleaning and processing,  
the resultant emissions produced, the inevitability of a fire, the destruction of our  
community's way of life, the health impacts, the effects on surrounding  
45 environment, homes and businesses. Why should the community's multitude of  
concerns and extreme opposition be set aside in the headlong rush to achieve state  
government recycling targets?

Where is the duty of care to its citizens? Of paramount importance in the

5 establishment of any industrial proposal should be the health, safety and welfare of the community. And yet there has been no health study conducted, which should have been a mandatory requirement. The location of such a factory, particularly in light of the draft design of the SHIP, simply beggars belief. The bulk and scale of Plasrefine is enormous. Its factories total eight acres in size, far exceeding the building to land ratio considered essential for any development. The land size to accommodate such a huge complex is simply too small and in terms of fire, the access and available resources are severely restricted, therefore placing surrounding homes and businesses in peril.

10 Our local fire stations are not manned 24/7 and our members are on call. Our fire brigades are ill-equipped to deal with such a chemical catastrophe, which would undoubtedly also require aerial support. Plasrefine has stated that our local fire crews at Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong would initially respond with three class two pumper trucks and one class one hazmat truck. If additional support is required, it would need to come from Campbelltown and Wollongong, a distance of some 45 minutes away. Meanwhile, Plasrefine burns, sending highly toxic carcinogenic emissions towards our northerly neighbours on the prevailing westerly winds, which are so common in the Highlands. I have more, but do you want me to –

**MR MILLS:** Put that in as a written submission or hand it to the staff there.

25 **MS KENNEDY:** I have more for a written submission, so it's up to you entirely. The stacks – Okay.

30 **MR MILLS:** Can I suggest that – I'm just trying to provide some balance in all of this as well. So can I suggest that you try and finish up in the next two minutes?

**MS KENNEDY:** Okay.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you.

35 **MS KENNEDY:** My second concern revolves around the four emission stacks and the 33 rooftop vents. It took considerable scanning of several GHD documents to ascertain exactly where those stacks were located and at what height and more significantly, precisely how many were intended. This information was not readily available in one easily accessible location. This information is of considerable concern and relevance not only to the wider community and northern towns and villages, but also to the most immediate sensitive receivers and businesses. The Garvan Institute in particular, also the EPA.

45 Perhaps this could be considered a strategic move by the proponent. Obtaining this information has not been an easy task. It required trawling through several documents and pouring over designs, updates, figures, and tables to unscramble the information and finally establish the statistics required. The main processing building also referred as building one at a height of 15.5 metres, has two rooftop

stacks on the northern elevation of no specified height and what appears to be nine rooftop vents again of no specified height in any design documents.

5 Mention is made of each of the four stacks being attached to an air pollution control system in Appendix J of the RTS. However, there does not seem to be any indication anywhere of a filtering system for the vents, meaning any additional noise emissions and odour will disseminate into the environment. Building two at a height of 16.7 metres at the southernmost end adjoins the remainder of building two 15.5 metres with an additional two stacks and what appears to be 24 rooftop  
10 vents. There's been no mention anywhere in preliminary documents of rooftop vents or plants, only skylights and solar panels.

Preliminary documents did, however, show a diagram of a single stack greater than 22 metres high. If this is still the anticipated height, then obviously being a  
15 rooftop stack on top of a building of 15.5 metres, the stack would need to rise a further 6.5 metres to achieve that height, not two metres as previously stated. Of extreme concern is bullet point three contained in the EPA document entitled EPA Advice on Amendment Report. Point three of the document states "The plant must be designed to not preclude the retrofit or inclusion of additional air emission  
20 controls and or increases in stack heights from air emission sources." So the final design or amendment as needed could mean an enormous unspecified increase in the height of those stacks. That was the only part I wanted to get to.

25 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Would Luke Fox be here?

**MR LUKE FOX:** Hello, I'm Luke Fox and I live and work in Moss Vale. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My wife's convict ancestor transported to Australia is buried in Sutton Forest. My mother-in-law went to  
30 school in Moss Vale and my children are growing up in Moss Vale. Our house is a hundred years old, and we now grow over 250 species of plant, both edible and medicinal. We love Moss Vale for its character, its natural beauty and its potential. If every location, even a small historic country town must bear the equal burden of toxic heavy industry, what is the purpose of planning to begin with? What good is it for a community to have aspirations if all it takes is a foreign investor to game  
35 the system and upend everything?

The Plasrefine project disregards the community's vision for Moss Vale, contradicts planning controls and poses environmental risks. It is not about progress, it is about exploitation. It is about taking advantage of loopholes in the  
40 planning process, using the scale of the project to bypass local concerns and secure lucrative government grants. The Moss Vale corridor plan calls for light industrial and commercial office uses and protecting the scenic amenity of the Moss Vale region. How do you reconcile this?

45 The Department of Planning's assessment report downplays the risk of microplastic pollution, despite evidence that the recycling process itself can generate significant amounts of these harmful particles. The report also fails to address the potential presence of PFAS chemicals that pose a serious threat to our

health and environment. You can choose to uphold the narrow technical interpretation of planning regulations, or you can choose to honour the spirit of those regulations and protect the unique character of our community.

5 As a father to two children, I urge you to reject this proposal. As a family with a long connection to the town, we ask you to deny this application. As a community, we stand before you in fear that our concerns like those presented to the Department of Planning will be dismissed as subservient to a shortsighted promise of employment by government seeking green credentials. We ask you respectfully,  
10 sincerely, and wholeheartedly to reject the Plasrefine project.

The IPC already knows the character of this area, including Moss Vale. We didn't want a coal mine promising 300 jobs despite them spending \$750 million to convince us that we did. And we don't want Australia's largest plastics processing  
15 plant with all its fumes, plastic particles, fire risks, and thousands of trucks. We don't own Moss Vale, but we do protect it from those who see not community, but a cash making opportunity. We preserve it for the next generations so they can grow food and raise families for another hundred years. We don't give in. We won't give up. We will fight because Moss Vale is not the right site. Thank you.

20 **MR MILLS:** We only have two speakers left and because we have been running early, they may not have had the chance to get here, although they were scheduled before this time. Shardaew Ewart and Colin Tyson? Sorry? Ah, thank you Jane.

25 **MS JANE AYLEN:** Okay, thank you. Good evening, Commissioners. I know it's been a really long day. I'm grateful you're still here, still able to hear from all of us on this important development. In my few minutes I'll address the irony of a bunch of tree hugging Gen X and Boomer environmental activists protesting  
30 something you'd think we'd support, a plastics recycling facility.

My family and I are avid recyclers. My kids experienced pocket money for the first time when the Highlands got our return and earn over at Mittagong. I was the annoying PNC president who insisted we collect cans at the Country Fair, sort  
35 them and take them for recycling. It was a messy job, and I was not popular. I advocate for creating a market for consumer products that support the circular economy. In fact, my outfit tonight contains content made from recycled bottles. And as an op shopper, I'm a big fan of our award-winning Resource Recovery Centre in Moss Vale.

40 Despite my support for recycling, I cannot concede that it's okay to build a plastics recycling facility so close to homes, schools, open space where kids ride their bikes and of course the waterways that sustain not only our wildlife but also our fellow citizens of New South Wales. In short, this is not the right site. My  
45 second issue goes to the consultation discussed in the Department's assessment report. I know the applicant consulted and made changes based on the consultations. I have three points to make on this. First, for most of the time, this proposal has been before the public. Wingecarribee Shire was in administration

and before that in disarray. I know the administration team did a great job, but we have not had adequate representation from elected councillors, as is my democratic expectation.

5 Second to that point, in this past madcap week, since this has risen so dramatically to public awareness, I've been shocked at the number of people I've met in the street who did not know about it, thought it had been dealt with or thought there was no way it could ever be approved. So a great deal of the concern you are hearing today and in the days to come is not based on misinformation, it's based on a lack of information.

10 Third, the Department recommends the applicant undertake further community consultation and keep residents informed. This seems unlikely. I've looked at the conditions of consent. They don't define the consultation required. They only request that the applicant report the consultation undertaken. There's a serious lack of faith in this applicant and that will take some serious and genuine effort to remedy.

15 Personally, I have a tendency to believe everyone is doing their best. My friends call out my lack of cynicism. In this case, I can't see how the applicant is likely to engage properly to heal the damage and make Moss Vale feel comfortable with this project. I believe that if this project proceeds, it will do real harm to community cohesion and institutional trust, and this is at a time when the community is desperate to build back the trust in our local government.

20 To bring it home, a final comment about your decision making process. I've been on a steep learning curve since last Monday reading documents I'd not normally have any business being quite so intimate with. From the Department's report, I know your decision will be guided by policy and you'll need to give weight to some policies over others. I relate. I would much rather be speaking in favour of a proposal for waste avoidance than against resource recovery and I'd prefer that we have a policy and legislation in place that deals with microplastics, which we don't.

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30 After that buildup I'm getting to my final point. Although SSDs don't need to consider DCPs – see I'm across the acronyms. The Department's assessment did, and the proposal looks on the surface to fit nicely with planning priority 3.1. However, it would only do so as you've already heard, by not discouraging businesses by taking up opportunities in the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, which also forms part of the Wingecarribee Shire Council's strategic plan.

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40 I love a plan as much as I love learning a new acronym. I'd very much like to see WSC deliver on that one. My reading of the council papers tells me our local government is doing everything it can to make that happen for me. However, I reiterate, between 2022 and just last week, we have not had elected representatives to properly hear and advocate for us on this matter or to help the community properly understand the proposal before us. My conclusion is not only is this not the right site, it's not the right time. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you, Jane. Do we have Colin Tyson? Terrific. Thank you.

5 **MR COLIN TYSON:** I'm hardly worthy of being the last speaker following Jane and Luke's really, really impressive presentation. I'll keep mine very simple, panel. This is a low rent, low technology solution to plastic waste. If we encourage this kind of 1950s way of thinking, we are saying no to all that innovation that's going on in universities around the world where they're trying to deal with plastic waste in a more efficient, environmentally friendly and safe way.

10 If you approve this kind of low rent stuff, then all that technology and all that expertise may as well just throw it out the window. We need to address plastic waste, not at the recycling or the repurposing, we need to address it at the source. We need to put the true cost of plastic. We've done it with container recycling, 15 we've done it with plastic bags at Coles. We can do it with this kind of plastic. And if we continue to approve this kinds of low tech solution, we are saying no to innovation and no to progress. Let's not take a backward step. Thank you very much.

20 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Do we still have Shardae Ewart and Tamara Facer? Friday? Yes, you are welcome to speak now if you'd prefer. No, that's okay. We'll take a five minute break, see if we can get hold of those two people in fairness to them to give them the opportunity to speak and then resume or close for the day if necessary. Five minutes. Thank you.

25 **SHORT BREAK**

**MR MILLS:** Tamara? Thank you.

30 **MS PETA PAGET:** Hi, I'm Peta. I'm speaking on behalf of the Southern Highlands Early Childhood Centre. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I guess respectfully, I'm sort of wondering if anybody on the panel actually live locally to Moss Vale. I'm an early childhood teacher at the childcare centre that's very close to the proposed site. I think it's within about 500 metres of 35 where the site's going to be, which we've only just found out that a lot of people didn't know that we were actually at the bottom of the hill, and we were right there. It's about a 10 minute walk from where our centre is. We cater for 46 children per day and approximately 120 children over the whole week. So each morning and afternoon there's approximately 60 cars entering the 40 childcare centre in the mornings and again in the afternoon. So there's about 120 cars at least entering and leaving from and onto Beaconsfield Road, which is extremely close to the proposed site.

45 We cater for zero to six who play outside throughout the day, and I have huge concerns in regards to the pollution from the proposed facility, along with the 200 trucks proposed to be driving past the childcare centre every day. The pollution from their exhaust, et cetera, plus the loud noises from the trucks as they drive past impacting on children's rest and sleep times. Beaconsfield Road is lucky to be



wide enough for two cars to pass and when there is a garbage truck on Beaconsfield Road, cars need to slow down and negotiate to get past the truck. So the road is just really just a country track. We already have issues with airborne pollens and sometimes rubbish tip smells plus occasional sewage odours after heavy rain. This results in us bringing our children inside to play, but it's occasionally, not daily. Already that's not fair to have that impact on the children's outside play being impacted by external sources, let alone adding another preventable air pollutant to the scenario.

I believe the company who will own and operate the facility already have a questionable track record – it's just what I've been told. I'm not going to say that I know a hundred per cent – in pollution monitoring and management. Do we really want our young and vulnerable children to be the guinea pigs in this situation? And do we really want to experiment with the health, short-term and long-term? It seems too easy for big companies to ignore and pretend their actions are safe and then just pay compensation to the sick and dying people down the track in 20 or so more years. Move the site away from young children and families and any future potential health problems will be avoided except for the workers because we don't know what the impact will be there.

Moss Vale have very strong winds most of the year, given the openness of the land in the Southern Highlands. It can be windy in Moss Vale, even when it's not windy anywhere else. It's normal to have 50 to 60 kilometre winds from the north or the south or from the west and it goes straight through our playgrounds. So we're not protected, we're out in the open. Can it be a hundred per cent guaranteed that our children and our families will never suffer any medical issues related to the pollution from the Plasrefine facility? Can we – whoever's in power to approve this development, could they 100 per cent say that there'll be zero impact from a health perspective on our families or our children and would they be happy to live near this as well? So we actually printed off a map just to show exactly where we are and where's the proposed site and how close it is in proximity and also our children did an artwork two years ago that we put into the Moss Vale Show to try and highlight what we felt was important for the environment and for our children. Thank you.

**MR MILLS:** Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of day one of the public meeting into the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. This meeting will commence at 10:00 AM this Friday, the 1st of November, here at the Bowral Memorial Hall. I'd like to thank everyone who has participated today in this very important process. All of the Commissioners here have appreciated your input. Just a reminder, it's not too late to have your say on the application. You can click Make a Submission on the Commission's website or send a submission via email or written post.

The deadline for written comments is currently 5:00 PM on Tuesday the 19th of November 2024. You heard a request today for that to be extended. That will be taken under consideration and will be advised. In the interest of openness and transparency, we will be making a full transcript of today's public meeting

5 available on our website in the next few days. At the time of determination, the Commissioner will publish its statement of reasons for decision, which will outline how the panel took into account the community's views in its considerations. Finally, a quick thank you to my fellow commissioners, Clare Sykes and Janett Milligan, and thank you all for your patience throughout the day as things have had to – we've had to deal with these things flexibly. Please enjoy your evenings. We look forward to hearing from more of you on Friday and later again when we do something. Thank you.

10 **>THE MEETING CONCLUDED**