



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

MOSS VALE PLASTICS RECYCLING FACILITY (SSD-9409987)

PUBLIC MEETING – DAY 3

PANEL: ANDREW MILLS (CHAIR)
CLARE SYKES
JANETT MILLIGAN

SPEAKERS: MICHAEL KEAN
SAM ZILINSKAS
JOB HARKNESS
EMMA MILOSEVIC
JACQUELINE JONES
THEO ONISFOROU
FIONA HARRISON
AINSLIE MCGLYNN
LAUREN BLOM
MARIA SAKELLARIADIS
TRISTAN RYALL
DUNCAN WOOD
JULIA ZEMIRO
MADELINE BAKER
DAVID MCDONNELL
KAY WOOD
JESSICA RYALL
JEREMY WATERS
NICHOLAS ROBERTS
CHRISTINE MCGUIGAN
DR JACQUELINE DUC

GHANIA DIB
BRIGID KENNEDY
GERALDINE HESSEY
ISABELLE HESSEY
REBECCA REIDY
SHANTELE HARKNESS
GREG HICKLING
SUSAN STANNARD
MAYOR JESSE FITZPATRICK
SOFIE MASON-JONES
ROMINA CAVALLO
DAVID GAMBLE
CHRIS RITCHIE
SHEELAGH LAGUNA

LOCATION:

ONLINE MEETING

DATE:

10:00AM – 2:40PM
TUESDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **MR ANDREW MILLS:** Well, good morning and welcome to the final day of the Independent Planning Commission's public meeting into the state significant development application for the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. I am speaking to you from Gadigal country. I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the countries from which we meet today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

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

15 We have a limited and specific role as part 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 or oral submissions, and other materials that the planning law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be made available on our website.

20 In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We 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 or not you like or approve of the applicant or the laws we must obey or the policies we must consider.

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

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

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

40 Today we will hear from registered speakers via telephone or video conference. The Commission has facilitated community members being able to view today's proceedings from Bowral Memorial Hall and online. Commission staff are on

hand at the hall to answer questions regarding submissions.

At the conclusion of today's public meeting, we will also hear from the applicant and the Department to answer any questions or respond to any issues that have
5 been raised during the public meeting.

While we will endeavour to stick to our published schedule, this will be dependent on registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. I will
10 introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the panel. Everyone has been advised in advance how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired.

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

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

For people viewing this public meeting from the Bowral Memorial Hall, exits
25 from that venue in the case of emergency are located on your left and the toilets are located outside the foyer area. We will now begin with our first speaker. Michael Kean, are you available?

30 **MR MICHAEL KEAN:** I am. Can you hear me okay?

MR MILLS: We can. Thank you, Michael.

35 **MR KEAN:** Yes, good morning everyone and Commissioners. Thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Michael Kean. My family and I live at (redacted) in Moss Vale. Alongside my partner Jo, our two boys and our dogs, we've built our lives in this beautiful community. Our property is directly adjacent to the proposed Plasrefine site, only 250 metres away, not the 400 plus
40 metres claimed by GHD. Since receiving that unmarked letter on Christmas Eve of 2020 we've had no genuine contact from the proponents. No calls, emails or offers to meet. Their claims of engagement with the nearest receivers simply aren't true.

We moved here from Sydney in 2016 drawn by Moss Vale's tranquillity and
45 strong community spirit and in 2019 we planted over 1,500 pinot noir vines on our property, investing in Southern Highlands' wine industry. This vineyard is located just 10 metres from the proponent's site's boundary. It represents years of hard work and significant financial investment but now this proposed development threatens everything we've built. The Southern Highlands has grown into a

premier wine destination attracting thousands of visitors each year. Our region is known for its stunning landscapes, fresh air and vibrant wine industry. Wine Australia has recognised our region as a favoured retreat where people come to experience our cellar doors, sample exceptional wines and enjoy the peaceful countryside.

This industry is not just a source of pride for us, it's the backbone of our local economy. The Southern Highlands wine region is home to over 60 vineyards and nearly 20 cellar doors, many of which host outdoor events, open air concerts and weekend lunches that draw tourists from Sydney and beyond. The mere presence of a large scale plastics waste recycling facility in the region will change that perception. People won't risk coming here if they're concerned about microplastics contaminating our air, soil, produce, as well as the wines that they'll be too scared to drink.

Grapes are incredibly sensitive to their environment. They absorb everything from the air, soil and the water around them. If consumers associate Southern Highlands wines with microplastics contamination, they will simply choose to visit or buy wines from other regions. This would not only devastate our wine industry but the entire tourism sector that so many local businesses rely on.

The proposed site lies within the Sydney drinking water catchment area. Any contamination from microplastics or runoff will affect the Wingecarribee River and subsequently the Warragamba Dam, a critical source of water for millions of human and animal lives. I can speak firsthand to the strength of the westerly winds in the area, having spent thousands of hours in our vineyard these last five years, reiterating 10 metres from the proponent's land. It is always windy. Not all day every day but certainly every day. These strong winds will carry airborne pollutants far beyond the immediate Moss Vale area, impacting crops, water sources and the health of many of our Southern Highland communities.

Our region is also vulnerable to bushfires. In fact, our property and the proponent site sit within a classified bushfire zone. We've already seen the impact of bushfires on our vineyards with smoke taint wiping out nearly the entire Southern Highlands red wine production in 2020. So when, not if, a fire breaks out at the proposed facility, toxic smoke will blanket the region, ruining crops, vineyards and threatening residents' health. For the wine businesses, I can't make this point clearer, a fire event will ruin their harvests. It will steal a whole year's income from innocent families and businesses, it will ruin their livelihoods.

The proposed development also introduces over 100 heavy truck movements daily, further degrading our already strained roads. This traffic will also deter tourists and disrupt the peaceful environment that people come here to enjoy. This is not just about inconvenience, it's about eroding the very essence of Moss Vale as a destination. Despite GHD's claims that we are a stagnant and aging community, in the eight years we've been here, Moss Vale has transformed into a vibrant community, attracting young families and small businesses. The proposed facility threatens to reverse that progress. The Southern Highlands Innovation Park

was meant for sustainable industries, not heavy industrial operations that jeopardise our health, economy and way of life.

5 We bought our little piece of Moss Vale with a dream of raising our kids in a safe healthy environment. If Plasrefine is approved, it will damage the property values of thousands of residents, deter new families and erode the culture we've all worked so hard to build. The risks to our environment, community and future are simply too great. There are better locations for a project like this, sites that do not threaten residents, agriculture, tourism or ironically be positioned directly next to a
10 research facility that is all about saving lives. This is not the right site. I respectfully urge the Commission to reject this proposal. Let's protect the Southern Highlands and everything that makes it special. Thank you.

15 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Michael, sorry. Lost him. Is Michael still with us?

MR KEAN: Yes. Can you hear me?

20 **MR MILLS:** Sorry. Yes, I can. Sorry, the picture just went, unfortunately. There, you're back again. Can I just ask one question? You indicated your proximity to the proposed site, sorry, the proposed development and the site. Just for my sense of geography, are you to the west? is that what I'm understanding?

MR KEAN: We are to the south.

25 **MR MILLS:** To the South, okay. Thank you.

30 **MR KEAN:** Yes. So our vineyard is at the northern end of our property. There's a 10 metre gap to the shared boundary fence, which is the proponent's land. The proposed development site sits on the block behind that, which is the 250 metre distance.

MR MILLS: Okay. No, that helps me. Thank you very much for that. Other questions? No, okay. Thank you, Michael.

35 **MR KEAN:** Thank you very much.

MR MILLS: Okay. Our next speaker is Sam Zilinskas. Is Sam available? Sam, how are you? Welcome. You appear to be on mute. No, I think you're coming through now.

40 **MR SAM ZILINSKAS:** All right, that's good.

MR MILLS: Thank you. Please go ahead.

45 **MR ZILINSKAS:** Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Sam Zilinskas and I'm a resident of Bowral and over the last fortnight many points have been raised about the negative impact set to be incurred by Plasrefine. In particular, the risk it imposes to Wingecarribee River, henceforth Sydney's water supply, the risk

it imposes on individuals' health and the risk of fire and the lack of contingencies that have been put in place to deal with such a catastrophic event were to occur. And I daresay someone even mentioned some of the geopolitical risks that may be associated with this proposal.

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From all these points raised, it is clear that this proposal exposes several apparent dangers, thus highlighting the need for the proponent to have shown proactiveness and good faith towards the community in the interests of social cohesion. Though regrettably it is my strong belief that Plasrefine has failed in this regard. In fact, it is my strong impression that Plasrefine has treated the community with nothing but utter contempt throughout this whole process. Somewhat they have inferred that many of us are just a bunch of small town NIMBYs who can't cope with change.

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Furthermore, it is my belief that there are some points where Plasrefine may have misled the Commission. Firstly, I refer to some commentary made by GHD consultant Miss Mason-Jones and I'll quote her here. "Now, we've tried at length to be as transparent as possible because that is what we have to do as technical experts. You have to stay transparent and neutral." And I really take exception to the words "transparent and neutral" because throughout this entire process I've attended all of their consultation evenings and frankly they've been nothing but transparent or neutral.

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And I take you to the first consultation event Plasrefine held, which was in 2022 at the Moss Vale Services Club and it was far from transparent. People had arrived in good faith to raise quite valid points of opposition and it became clear quite soon on that people who weren't willing to abide by the narrative that Plasrefine was trying to inflict upon us, that there were security guards there (redacted) and it was hardly transparent or neutral, when individuals weren't even given a valid opportunity to voice these quite valid and respectful points of opposition at the time.

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And I'm someone though that I like to give people the benefit of the doubt so I attended their next consultation event in 2023 at the Moss Vale Community Centre this time and once again it appeared that Plasrefine was manipulating the process. We were only allowed to attend in very quite substantially small groups and we were forced to write on sticky notes any points of opposition we have. Now, any reasonable person knows that these are complex matters and you simply cannot write that on a small, very small sticky note as such. And furthermore, GHD would then pick the points that they deemed suitable to put forward.

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So here it's the whole process has been manipulated and the community until now has not had a valid form of consultation to be able to raise their points of view. And the third consultation event was concerning too. It was held in Exeter and I'm not sure your knowledge of geography around here but Exeter is a very small village in the south. It's inaccessible for people who do not have a car. So that was simply unsustainable too to be expecting people to be making a trip out to Exeter at 6.30 on a winter's night. So it's dark, there's insufficient lighting to access there

and let alone on that day too we had a torrential weather event. Now, I know that was obviously out of Plasrefine's control but there were calls where maybe they could have rescheduled the event, taking in those events into consideration yet they refused. So throughout in all of these instances that I've raised, it's hardly been transparent or neutral.

Secondly, I wish to point out some more questionable commentary made by another consultant, Miss Cavallo and I quote her. "So from a community point of view there's a of sensitivity around their local area and I have to say that we have been talking to an [unintelligible 00:24:34] –

MR MILLS: ... has failed. We are getting other feeds, so it seems okay. I think we'll have to move on in any event. Sam, if you can hear us, thank you for your submissions. If you would like to follow up anything in writing, that would be terrific. Thank you. The next speaker is Job Harkness. Hello Job. Welcome.

MR JOB HARKNESS: Hello, how are you going?

MR MILLS: Well, thank you. How are you?

MR HARKNESS: Good, thank you. Yes, my name is Job Harkness. I would like to thank the panel of the Independent Planning Commission for listening to our concerns about the proposed Plasrefine factory near our family home. We have worked very hard as a family to be able to buy our 11 acre block, which we have greatly improved and have invested a lot of time, money and hard work into. We try to provide a healthy life for our children, where we hand milk our own house cows, raise some of our own meat, have chooks for eggs and grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables and drink tank water which is collected off our house roof.

Our house is only a few hundred metres from the proposed Plasrefine site and is located west-northwest of the site, pretty much directly downwind of the proposed site. They tell me Plasrefine will be a 24 hour a day, seven day a week operation with a great number of trucks coming and going. This noise pollution would send anyone mad that would live in our position and the fallout from the microplastic pollution to our roof collected tank water and pastures for our animals would totally destroy the healthy life we try to live. There is no doubt we would have to sell our house and life we have built and move if Plasrefine was to go ahead. But who would buy our house? Who would want to live in this house, in this noise and plastic polluted environment? The value of our property would be dramatically affected.

I put it to you, the panel, would you approve this factory if you or your family lived where we live, if you had invested all your life to get yourself into this, to be built so close to residential areas? It's just not the right site and must not go ahead. Thank you very much for your time.

MR MILLS: The next speaker is Emma Milosevic.

MS EMMA MILOSEVIC: Good morning, members of the IPC and my community of the Southern Highlands. My name is Emma Milosevic and I'm a resident of Moss Vale. I'm a mother of an 11 year old girl and I'm a regenerative farmer. Every aspect of my life will be affected if the proposed Plasrefine project goes ahead on Beaconsfield Road.

I'm here today because I'm furious. The Plasrefine proposal is a simple case of greenwashing by the state government Paul Scully and Penny Sharpe have latched on to the promise of recycling as a quick and easy solution to the plastics crisis. However, far from being a solution, this is a façade, a form of greenwashing that gives the illusion of environmental responsibility without delivering tangible and safe results for my community and New South Wales at large.

At its core, greenwashing is a form of misleading marketing or public relations where an organisation or government presents itself as environmentally responsible, even when its actions contradict its claims. The state government, as representatives of our community, have an essential role to play in ensuring that plastic recycling efforts are not just cosmetic or [unintelligible 00:29:17] but meaningful and impactful. Yet the state government, under pressure from lobbyists and industries, have endorsed and promoted a recycling initiative in my town that is more about public relations than environmental protection.

Plasrefine has little regard for the environmental damage they will inevitably cause in our community. Just one example of what could and will go wrong is fire. A fire at the Plasrefine site is inevitable. The statistics show this and our rural fire service is innately inadequate to deal with such a catastrophe. A fire at the site will pollute the air and our water with toxic chemicals and microplastics that stick like glitter to anything they encounter, including human beings and animals. That includes our children playing outside in their schoolyards or in their own backyards, our wildlife and the animals grazing in our paddocks, let alone the waterways that run through them, the waterways that flow into Warragamba Dam, the drinking water reservoir of our largest city.

In the case of Plasrefine, the cost of the state government's greenwashing will be borne by our community. We will bear the brunt of environmental degradation. These are not abstract costs. They are tangible real world consequences that affect human health, biodiversity and the integrity of our ecosystems. Meanwhile, the public at large remains lulled into complacency by promises of a recycling revolution, a narrative that aligns with the government's political agenda and corporate interests, but which sidesteps the more difficult but necessary truly addressing the plastic crisis. I am disillusioned and I am angry.

I want you to know today that we will never accept this proposal for the Southern Highlands and we will never abide by a process that deliberately disenfranchises what we know to be the right for our community. This is a high risk hazardous manufacturing factory which will rip the heart out of our community and the Sydney water drinking catchment. This is not the right site and we will never accept this proposal in our community. Thank you for your time.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Emma. The next speaker is Jacqueline Jones. Welcome Jacqueline.

5 **MS JACQUELINE JONES:** Members of the community, the IPC panel, thank
you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jacqueline Jones and I'm a
resident of Moss Vale, living 2.7 km from the proposed Plasrefine site. I am the
mother of two teenage boys who frequent the cricket nets of Lackey Park, 1.2 km
10 walking path with our dog Gus and moved to the highlands for its clean air and
open spaces. I am also Dr Jacqueline Kerfoot, palliative care specialist physician
with over 20 years' experience treating adults of all ages with incurable illnesses
such as advanced cancer, organ diseases and neurodegenerative diseases such as
Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease and dementia.

15 This proposal has kept me awake at night over the last month and weighs heavily
on my heart. I would like to strongly object to the Plasrefine plastic recycling
facility going ahead on the proposed site as I feel the health, social and
environmental risks are too high. The world is grappling with the impact of
20 microplastics. There is a flurry of research and commentary across the major
health institutions of Europe, America and Asia as we try and understand the
human health effects of these ubiquitous pollutants.

25 What do we know? Researchers have found microplastics can enter our body by
ingestion, inhalation or through the skin and enter our organs and accumulate.
They have been found in blood, breast milk, saliva, the placenta, testicles, hearts,
liver, kidney and brain. They were found in increased concentrations in brain and
liver samples in an American study examining human cadavers at autopsy.
30 Investigators studying a model of human intestinal cells, looking at how
microplastics might be absorbed in the gut, found nanoplastics can enter the
nucleus inside the cell. This is where the genetic material is.

35 In the placenta study titled concerningly "Plasticenta," published in 2021 from a
group in Italy, pigmented microplastics were found on the maternal and foetal
sides of the placenta and the amniotic sac membrane. Researchers were alarmed
that they could cross the placental barriers protecting the foetus and concluded that
microplastics carry substances which act as endocrine disruptors, which could
cause long-term health effects by altering signalling between mother and foetus
during development.

40 A cardiac study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in March this
year found in 150 patients out of 304 studied microplastics carry substances –
sorry, microplastics were found inside the coronary artery atheroma plaques
removed as blockages. Those people with microplastics were at higher risk of
45 heart attack, stroke and death at 34 months follow up.

A further study published in May this year in Toxicological Sciences looked at
microplastics in the testes of human and dogs and found 12 different microplastics

in human and dog testicular samples, most commonly PE and PVC. And when they went on to study the dogs, there was a statistically significant reduction in sperm count in dogs with certain microplastics.

5 The evidence of harm from plastics generally is much more expansive. The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, Adelaide University and the Minderoo Foundation published a meta-analysis of all the published research on plastics and human health in 2024. It found plastic exposure was linked to multiple human health issues at birth, in childhood, adult reproductive, endocrine, child
10 neurodevelopment, nutritional, circulatory, respiratory. skin and numerous cancers. Mouse studies have shown the presence of microplastics in the brain changed behaviour and increased the risk of dementia.

15 So from all this reading I've done I'm very concerned about microplastics causing human health issues and I think it's obvious we should be reducing our exposure. This coupled with the research done by Professor Fisal Hai from Wollongong University, published in March 2024, looking at emissions and [unintelligible
00:36:34] technology in plastic recycling facilities, concluding there needs to be more regulation of the recycling industry to control the amount of microplastics
20 produced and released into the environment. If industry experts are concerned, I am concerned.

25 Now, let's look at the site, on a windy hill on the Sydney water catchment. When the New South Wales government and National Health and Medical Research Council are reviewing the guidelines currently on the safe amount of PFAS in drinking water and the NHMRC have nine existing studies on PFAS and its potential human impacts funded by the government ongoing. Right next to residential properties and very close to daycares, schools and the towns of Moss Vale, New Berrima, Berrima and Burradoo. So the government on one side are
30 concerned about microplastics and on the other side have approved this facility without considering the risks. Clearly not the right site.

35 In conclusion, as a palliative care physician, I spent years walking alongside patients and their families, witnessing the profound stress and suffering that diseases like cancer inflict on their lives. And today I stand before you, not only as a doctor but as a passionate advocate for the health and safety of our community. The thought of living near a facility that could increase our exposures to microplastics brings with it a cascade of anxiety and fear that no one should have
40 to endure.

I ask you to think of someone you know with cancer, dementia or advanced illness. We can't fix many of these illnesses with medical science and so we should make sure we are not increasing exposure to environmental toxins that could contribute to the development of them in the first place. We have a duty to
45 protect our community from unnecessary risks. I believe we have enough evidence to be very concerned about the environmental, social and health impacts of this plastic recycling facility so close to residents and on the water catchment. Thank you for listening.

MR MILLS: Thank you. Questions? No. Thank you

MS JONES: Thank you.

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MR MILLS: Our next speaker is – Theo?

MR THEO ONISFOROU: Yes.

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MR MILLS: Thank you. Please go ahead.

MR ONISFOROU: Thank you. My name is Theo Onisforou. Sorry, there's a terrible echo, by the way.

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MR MILLS: We're not getting it at this end, Theo. If you can persist at your end, hopefully it might clear.

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MR ONISFOROU: Okay. Thank you. Okay my name is Theo Onisforou. I'm a retired barrister at law. I was a local government specialist. I've been a property developer for over 50 years and I've been a cattle grazier for over 35 years and those 35 years have been in the highlands, nearer to Bowral than to Moss Vale.

25

Now, it's important – I understand that there's about 30 people speaking today and I'm sure you've heard from others as well. What I want to do is make quite plain that I do not consider myself a NIMBY. What I believe is a NIMBY is a person that says, "I don't want this development next door to me." If I turn my volume down, can you still hear me?

30

MR MILLS: [unintelligible 00:39:53] moment if you want to keep going.

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MR ONISFOROU: Yes, no because the echo's terrible. I don't consider myself a NIMBY. A NIMBY is basically a neighbour to a development that just doesn't want it there even though the development is probably beneficial to the whole municipality. And everybody that speaks against this development are not NIMBYs. As far as I'm concerned, they are democrats. We do not want this plant there, not because we're NIMBYs but because it's not in the best interests of the municipality.

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I believe that any local councillor that sought election on the basis that they support this development would not be elected. I believe any state government politician that had as part of their mantra support for this development, they would not be elected. I believe any federal government candidate that had support for this development would not be elected. Now, what does that mean? It means this, that from a democracy point of view, we don't want this for reasons I'll give in a moment. We don't want it and we're not being unreasonable in saying we don't want it because we're not NIMBYs, we're simply saying democracy says we're entitled to say, "Hey, we don't want this here" and that is what we're saying.

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Now, I'll give you some of my experiences as a relatively successful developer and a farmer. I use water tanks at my farm in Bowral. I collect my rainwater but – and despite the fact that we have a high class filtration system, I buy drinking water. Why do I buy drinking water? Because I know that we use chemicals to spray our paddocks and I'm aware of spray drift and its impact on water collection upon your roof. Now, the reality is in agriculture, using these chemicals is an accepted use but the reality is this plant poses an additional major risk to my drinking water.

Now, in Gundagai, where I have another farm, a lot of the spraying is done by helicopter and aeroplanes because they're big expansive farms. Again, I buy drinking water. I will not expose my family to the possibility of these chemicals, which are approved by the state government by the way, of infiltrating my watering system.

Now, I want to talk to you about a development application I had myself for a childcare centre in Bowral recently. I had submitted with my development application 13 independent expert reports which all supported my DA. The fact is the proposed childcare centre was in a flood zone but we, as a developer, I designed the childcare centre to be above the maximum flood level. In other words, scientifically there was no chance that any of the children attending that childcare centre would ever be in danger of drowning, for example. Now, ultimately Council knocked back that childcare centre and I accepted their decision. But the basis upon which it was knocked back was a simple one – that's not four minutes, is it?

MR MILLS: Yes, it is.

MR ONISFOROU: Jeez. Council knocked it back because of the possibility of human stupidity or human error, stupidity being they were concerned that parents wanted to go and see their children [unintelligible 00:43:34] pick them up rather than leave them in a place where they were safe. In other words, stupidity was the basis of knocking that development back. Now, in this case, what's proposed is a fully operational processing plant. There is chances of accidents, there are chances of stupidity of their operators, all of which will lead to the poisoning of the environment.

I'm going to speed up. Planning law is today behind reality and science. This DA is in fact a rezoning by stealth. It's a forever chemicals DA. The reality is planning controls are not yet properly developed to address this sort of DA. This DA should be rejected until planning laws address forever chemicals. Sir James Goldsmith said, "Worry about your worst case scenario and let your best case scenario look after itself." In our case, the worst case scenario is an unexpected emission, which will then prejudice the whole of the environment.

I've submitted to you the Sydney Morning Herald article dated 23 October 24 which is about a chemical spill 32 years ago. 32 years later they've worked out that that is the source of a contamination of the water supply in the Blue

Mountains. The reality is let's not forget the worst case scenario here is that there is an emission, unexpected, unplanned or out of stupidity.

5 Now, as a former barrister, I will tell you this. You can get an expert, you can always get an expert to say no and another expert to say yes. Why? Because they're like lawyers, they're paid guns for hire. I don't doubt that the developer can get experts to say this plant will be safe. What I challenge you to do is say to those experts, "Will you personally guarantee that there will be no harm in a worst case scenario?" My answer is not a chance on the planet. You can get an expert to
10 say anything and I'm sorry for disrespecting you experts but barristers, you see barristers standing up in court, both arguing the opposite case on the same argument.

15 Now, I'm simply saying here if in doubt leave out and here there is no reason to rush such a plant. Let's defer this application or reject it now. They're welcome to back later when planning laws are clear and distinct on forever chemicals. This is a development in the wrong time because planning laws need to catch up to society, wrong place – should never ever, by the way, be in a catchment location. May I suggest this is better placed in an area away from a population base and in an
20 existing sterile poor quality environment, which is what the Southern Highlands is not.

MR MILLS: Theo –

25 **MR ONISFOROU:** I'm going to say this –

MR MILLS: Excuse me, Theo.

30 **MR ONISFOROU:** I predict, without any hesitation, that the ultimate financial beneficiary of this proposal will not for an instant say, "Yes, I will personally with my own assets guarantee that there will be no harm come consequent upon this development.

35 **MR MILLS:** Theo –

MR ONISFOROU: All he'll do is stand behind his \$2 company and let us residents just suffer. He'll walk away if the worst case scenario happens and he'll have lost his \$2.

40 **MR MILLS:** Theo, you're over seven minutes now. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to – Theo, you're over seven minutes now.

MR ONISFOROU: But I'd like to think that what I'm saying is not a repeat of some of the other things.

45 **MR MILLS:** I think he's turned his volume down so unfortunately he can't hear us. He's now very well over time so thank you.

MR ONISFOROU: May I say –

MR MILLS: We'll have to move on to – in fairness to other speakers, we'll have to move on to the next one. Is Fiona Harrison there?

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MS FIONA HARRISON: Yes, I am. Can you hear me?

MR MILLS: Thank you. We can hear you. Thank you, Fiona.

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MS HARRISON: Thank you. [non-English 00:47:17] good morning. My name is Fiona Harrison and I'm a proud descendant of the Wiradjuri. I'd like to begin by acknowledging this beautiful part of Gandangara country, the Southern Highlands and pay respect to First Nations people who've walked and cared for her for over 60,000 years.

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I was drawn here by the cool climate, lush greenery and biodiversity on our doorstep. Moss Vale is different from city suburbia. It's a place of green spaces where nature thrives alongside us. My small garden is alive with native birds and the stormwater easement beside my home is a sanctuary for echidnas and long neck turtles which are protected species. Who would think that a stormwater easement, dangerous to humans because of flash flooding, could be a haven for so many native animals. I often witness the magnificent glossy black cockatoo, a vulnerable species, flying from the conifers around the Plasrefine site to the sheoaks beside me to eat the cones and surf the wind on the branches.

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If the soft plastics recycling facility is built, what will happen to the black cockatoos? The green spaces around the Plasrefine site are critical to preserving the Southern Highlands biodiversity. As an Aboriginal person, it's my cultural obligation to speak up for country and this facility threatens not only the environment and wildlife, but also community health and cultural heritage.

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Plasrefine's environmental impact statement details the mechanical recycling processes the facility will use as shredding, granulating, extrusion and pelletising. These processes introduce harmful emissions and create harm. Shredding and granulating produce dust and microplastics, polluting the air. Heating plastics during extrusion and pelletising releases volatile organic compounds called VOCs and other hazardous pollutants as well as foul odours in the atmosphere.

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Moss Vale and surrounds experience regular wind gusts reaching up to 63 km/h. These winds will carry airborne pollutants far beyond the facility, causing respiratory issues and long term health impacts. Noise pollution is also another serious concern. The noise of shredders, granulators and extruders generate substantial noise. Prolonged exposure to high noise levels is linked to hearing loss, increased stress and diminished quality of life, especially for those living near facilities like Plasrefine.

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Water and ground contamination also pose significant risks. Mechanical recycling processes generate microplastics that can contaminate water and soil, especially

dangerous with Plasrefine's proximity to sensitive riparian zones. Studies reveal that wastewater from soft plastics recycling facilities can be a major source of microplastic pollution. Any filtration failures would introduce microplastics into the nearby Wingecarribee River, endangering wildlife health and potential for these particles to bio accumulate in food chains. The recycling process also uses large amounts of water, creating wastewater that can carry microplastics and chemical residues. Without strict management, runoff would enter local streams feeding the Wingecarribee River and eventually the Warragamba Dam, which is Sydney's primary drinking water source.

Fire is another well-documented risk. Fires in soft plastic recycling facilities reach extreme temperatures, often requiring dozens of firefighters and hazmat response teams. Moss Vale's fire station is unmanned and relies on volunteer firefighters with limited equipment. A large scale fire at Plasrefine would be more than local fire crews could handle and as the fire burnt out of control, the toxic fumes would be an immediate risk to respiratory health and cause long-term environmental damage.

An Aboriginal cultural heritage management plan for this project has been delayed until after potential approval, which feels more about compliance than genuine preservation. And while the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has suggested conditions to address community concerns around this and also many other issues, it remains unclear how these conditions would be enforced post approval. The environmental, health and cultural risk of this project are not abstract possibilities. They are real and they are present.

Additionally, a lot more has been learned about the risks of soft plastic recycling facilities since this project was assessed and therefore the Plasrefine proposal should be reassessed and located in a more suitable area away from the environmentally sensitive Southern Highlands region.

In closing, while I recognise the role of the Independent Planning Commission is to consider the facts around design, land use and traffic, I urge the committee to recognise that the Plasrefine proposal is not just a matter of compliance, it's deeply personal for many residents in Moss Vale and beyond. For me, this proposal is especially stressful because I live less than 1 km the Plasrefine site. I've invested my life savings and a mortgage into my home and the likelihood that this facility will devalue my property, potentially disrupting my future is devastating.

I have asthma and I cannot risk the added harm of toxic airborne pollutants and living with PTSD, my garden and the trees and wildlife in the stormwater easement provide an essential safety barrier and mental health support. So I should not have to stay indoors out of fear of unsafe air, foul odours or the constant noise of trucks. This would severely affect my wellbeing. The human centric implications of this facility are huge. This project will place an unacceptable burden on our community, environment and future generations who did not ask for this facility to be placed next door nor do we want it. In the interests of the people,

the land and the future of Moss Vale, I ask you to reject the Plasrefine proposal for the Southern Highlands. Thank you.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Fiona. Appreciate that. Our next speaker is Ainslie McGlynn.

MS AINSLIE MCGLYNN: Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?

10 **MR MILLS:** We can. Thank you.

MS MCGLYNN: Thank you. I'm Ainslie. I'm a mum and our home is 2 km from the proposed site. This is not GHD's first rodeo but it is mine, so I thank the IPC for allowing me to be heard and to have a crack at ripping the head off this snake.

15 Moss Vale is a rapidly growing vibrant rural village and holiday location. Ethos Urban made the claim in their SIS that Moss Vale is a stagnant and aging community. This is wrong. Their projections and that additional 20 residents per year in our SSA based on data from 2021 did not consider the post-COVID numbers of our population that now work from home. The rapidly growing
20 population of young families who have moved to the area since then and the fact that median house prices have gone up by 45.5% in the last five Years due to population growth and demand. Schools are bursting, daycares are at capacity with long wait lists and our recreational facilities are overflowing with children and young people.

25 The location of this gargantuan waste project smacked inside all of this hullabaloo is wrong. It has slipped through the cracks. The social impacts to Moss Vale residents are mentally devastating. Putting the microplastic and environmental concerns aside, the structure of this waste project is colossal. The EIS states, "The
30 scale and nature of buildings would result in a discernible change to the visual characteristics, features and values of the proposed site and immediate area."

35 Plasrefine, if approved, will be one and a half times the size of the oval at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The MCG oval is approximately 20,000 square metres. This waste project will take up 30,000 and tucked snugly within a picturesque highlands rural and residential setting on a riparian corridor right by our water catchment, at least 16.5 metres high, when you include the stacks, and 150 metres from homes. This wildly opposing juxtaposition of structure and
40 setting is ludicrous and depressing.

45 The photo montages in the portal where the trees are superimposed across the northern border of the southern zone to illustrate what sight mitigation measures will look like are at 10 years from now. A lot of psychological damage can happen in 10 years. Will mechanical plastic recycling still be the order of the day? Do we find out greenwashing was a thing? What more will we learn about the dangers of microplastics? There's a lot of unknowns around Plasrefine's longevity and to get sign off for a hazardous project this size, I'd have thought there'd have to be a few more absolutes or at least an attempt at conducting a health impact assessment. In

any case, to accept that some trees will lessen Plasrefine's visual impact are shortsighted and out of touch.

5 When you look at other plastics recycling facilities in Australia that convert collected plastics into reusable forms like flakes, pellets and resins as Plasrefine, there's a pattern. They're all located in appropriate industrial areas with appropriate exclusion zones. Goldrec Australia, Menangle. Circular Plastics in Ettamogah. Kangaroo Plastics, Campbellfield, Victoria. YCA Recycling in Wingfield, SA. Why? Fire. There have been 20 fires in plastics and reprocessing facilities in Australia since 2019. 74-76 Beaconsfield Road, according to the NSW RFS is within a designated bushfire prone area. This information is valid and up to date, contrary to the letter to the SEARs back in 2020, found on the portal, which states that that it's not.

15 We know that Plasrefine will be five times bigger than any plastics recycling plant in the country, 150 metres from homes and 50 metres from the irreplaceable Garvan. We know 20,000 tonnes of plastic waste will be stored on site along with a who knows amount of undisclosed chemicals as well as a patented formula used to wash plastic materials using tea tree oil, turps and 80% ethanol. We know it's in a wind tunnel and sitting on fire prone land. The fire safety plan stating that a few trucks across the entire highlands, if available, would be enough to contain a fire before reinforcements could arrive is careless, dangerous and lacks seriousness and we deserve better.

25 I have other concerns. The further degradation to our crumbling roads; Council's continuous proclamations that we don't have the water and wastewater infrastructure to support this facility; the inability for local residents, especially those living metres away, to peacefully enjoy their lives free from anxiety, fear and disturbance; the inability for people to sell their homes; the fact this enormous multiple stacked waste plant, despite the trees in 10 years, will be visible from some of our most popular and scenic vantage points; the harm to our endangered platypus and water catchment; the Indigenous significance and claims the site is rich with vestige and of course the damage to the pillars of intergenerational equity the proposed location will cause.

35 140 jobs when up and running, so Plasrefine predicts, but what about the hundreds of jobs lost with the ship down the gurgler? The growth possibility, inspiration and economic bounty of this village stopped dead in its tracks because a foreign investor saw an opportunity to strike. We've been here before.

40 To conclude, if this proposal gets rejected, Plasrefine will find a more appropriate site. If Plasrefine gets approved, the social, psychological, environmental and economic impacts to our community will be devastating and rippled across generations. I want to reference a quote made by the MD of Plasrefine in the SMH regarding the project. She said, "Think about the next generation" and to that I say that's exactly what I'm doing. I'm thinking about the generation after that and also the generation after that. The location of this waste project is wrong. They got it wrong. It's not the right site.

MR MILLS: Thank very much, Ainslie.

MS MCGLYNN: Thank you.

MR MILLS: Any questions? No. Thank you. Our next speaker is Lauren Blom.

MS LAUREN BLOM: Good morning. Can you hear me?

MR MILLS: We can. Thank you.

MS BLOM: Good morning. My name is Lauren Blom. I'm a Southern Highlands resident, business owner and mother. I would like to express my strong opposition to this project in its proposed location. I firmly believe that this site is not suitable for such a facility and the planning process to date has been ad hoc and lacking in essential detail. One of the most pressing concerns is the proposed use of Braddon Road, a residential area which presents significant conflict in land use. Currently, there is no clear plan on how residents will safely access their homes with the increased traffic that this facility would generate.

It is important to note that in a final plan for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, Braddon Road does not form part of the new network of roads. This raises further concerns about the suitability of this location for such a large scale facility, as Braddon Road is classified as a rural residential road, not a collector road as stated by GHD. If Braddon Road is utilised for industrial purposes, it will inevitably lead to heavy traffic in our local town.

Additionally, this project is riddled with concerns regarding the absence of any specified limit on the number of trucks that Plasrefine could potentially operate. The current consent does not provide clarity on this matter, which could result in over 200 trucks or more accessing the site daily. This significant oversight must be addressed. We need a clear limit on truck movements to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community.

Furthermore, there is insufficient information regarding how light vehicles and staff would access the site. This lack of detail raises serious questions about traffic management and safety. One of the direct neighbours is Moss Vale Hay Sales, which GHD has completely overlooked as a sensitive receptor. This conflict of use is particularly concerning as Moss Vale Hay Sales is renowned for providing high quality equine feed in a pristine environment. Being associated with microplastics and rubbish due to the facility's proximity could severely damage this business.

Lastly, I must emphasise that this site is located in a bushfire prone area, yet the current consent does not adequately address this critical issue. The safety of our community must be a top priority and the potential risks associated with bushfire hazards have not been sufficiently considered in this proposal. This oversized factory requires a larger site, one that is not situated in a riparian zone and has more suitable access.

In conclusion, I urge the Commission to reconsider the approval of Plasrefine in this location. The lack of detail and the potential impact on our community are significant concerns that cannot be overlooked. Thank you for your time.

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MR MILLS: Thank you, Lauren. If you're still there we have a question.

MS BLOM: Yes.

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MR MILLS: Thank you.

MS JANETT MILLIGAN: Hello Lauren.

MS BLOM: Sorry, I can't –

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MS MILLIGAN: Can you can, Lauren? Is that –

MS BLOM: Yes.

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MS MILLIGAN: Okay. All right. I just wanted to clarify the comment you made, you're concerned about there's no limit on truck numbers and I think we've seen through presentations that there is an understanding about maximum truck numbers. So I'm just thinking could you talk a little bit more about what your concern is there?

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MS BLOM: My concern is that who is going to limit the number of trucks.

MS MILLIGAN: So it's about compliance?

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MS BLOM: Yes.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much, Lauren.

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MS BLOM: Thank you.

MR MILLS: Okay. Our next speaker is Maria Sakellariadis. Maria, how are you?

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MS MARIA SAKELLARIADIS: Hello. I would like to begin – can you hear me?

MR MILLS: We can, thank you.

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MS SAKELLARIADIS: Thank you. Sorry. I would like to begin by acknowledging the First Nation custodians of this land. I would also like to thank the Independent Planning Commission for their time today. My name is Maria Sakellariadis. I have lived in Moss Vale for 14 years and my mother has lived in

Moss Vale for over 20 years. I am raising my children here. Becoming a part of this community has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. I am an artist and a small businesswoman and I would like to address the Commission from both of these perspectives.

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The role of the artist is to see, to reflect and to reveal. Since the inception of the Plasrefine project and particularly as it draws closer to approval, I have witnessed my community become increasingly troubled, distressed and burdened by a sense of threat. This community overwhelmingly does not want this project. It threatens our health, our amenity, our environment and our identity. We feel grief when we look at the proposed site. We feel dismay that our town's character and future will be forever changed by such a project and diverted from the path towards development we have been on.

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I am also a small businesswoman engaged with two other women in a seedling growing business. The Plasrefine project sits entirely at odds with this business as it threatens the very things we rely upon to grow and encourage others to grow food. Clean soil, clean water, clean air. We are a small local business like so many others in this region, depending ending on the inherent character of this place for our survival. The nature of this development, the scale of it can only radically shift the character of our town and our whole region.

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I have been humbled and proud to witness this community's response to this project, their courage, their commitment, their diligent research and passionate effort to protect the place where we live. I believe this is not NIMBYism. This development should not be in anyone's backyard. It is inappropriate both in scale and nature to sit alongside the places where people live, work, grow food and where children go to be cared for and educated. I ask the Commission to consider deeply the deeply felt and carefully researched rejection of this project by the community who would be forever impacted by its approval. This is not the right site. Thank you.

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MR MILLS: Thank you, Maria our next speaker is Tristan Ryall. Tristan, welcome.

MR TRISTAN RYALL: Hi. Ready to go?

MR MILLS: Yes, thank you.

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MR RYALL: Okay. I'm a registered architect for a design practice in the highlands. I work across 12 New South Wales councils plus the ACT, so I deal with the planning system every day. What we're seeing with Plasrefine is multiple failures of the planning system and failures to implement the current planning system correctly.

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Firstly, the big picture is the reason we have a planning system is to avoid building factories in residential areas. If you think back to the hellscapes of 19th century Victorian cities with coal power plants and smoke stacks and factories in the

middle of people's houses, we invented the planning system to stop this. As some other speakers have said, the orderly development of the land to protect people's health and wellbeing. But here we've got a proposal for an enormous factory directly next to residential areas.

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You can see that in the ACT – people have mentioned Hume, where there was a plastics recycling factory in Fyshwick, these industrial areas are built kilometres away from residential suburbs, not 100 metres, 200 metres. Because that was in a city in an industrial area with other potential dangerous buildings nearby, it had city levels of firefighting capabilities, not just Rural Fire Service, and they still couldn't put that fire out. Here we've got just a small town sized firefighting service plus Rural Firefighting Service. What chance would they have?

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Secondly, we're seeing multiple legacy planning issues on this site left over from previous councils that were so dysfunctional that were put into administration across two council terms and this proposal should not get away without addressing these. These things may be the current planning rules but whether they should be, whether they will be addressed in the current council, there's no discussion of any of these issues. So here's a few to get started.

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The current zoning in the area is absolutely nonsensical. How often do you see the zoning change four times across three blocks of land with the Plasrefine block being in two entirely contradictory zones on the one block, between E4 general industrial and then C4 environmental. So the environmental zone there is usually next to National Parks protecting areas of environmental concern or protection. How do you transition from one to the other that quickly? And then immediately on the next block go into RU2 and then again to RU4.

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Between the bottom of the hill and the proposed site, so the bottom of the hill being down in the residential zoned areas of Moss Vale, four different development control plans apply across the distance of about four blocks. You've got the Moss Vale DCP, which stops at the edge of the R2 zone. You've got the rural lands DCP, which applies to the RU2 rural landscape zone and then you've got the RU4 is covered by the rural living DCP and then you move into the Moss Vale Enterprise Development Corridor DCP for the industrial portion of the site. So between one block and the next, totally different planning rules apply.

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The zones as applied make no sense. You've got residential sized lots along Beaconsfield Road, you know, quarter acre blocks and they're zoned as rural. And then you've got the larger blocks on the rest of the hillside vary between environmental C4 and RU4 despite there being no change in character. Why is one block here so worthy of environmental protection that it's C4 and then the next one is RU4 and then the next one is switched to industrial in the same area of open residential area?

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The current zoning doesn't align with either the SHIP looking forward or the current development control plan, the Enterprise DCP, looking backwards. The current DCP identifies it as an enterprise precinct for light industrial and

commercial. Under the current zoning system that should properly be zoned as E3 productivity support, which the SHIP proposes on some areas nearby going forward, but this isn't addressed in any way.

5 The big one that nothing has been addressed is the bushfire mapping. The bushfire mapping in Wingecarribee Shire is wildly out of date. The current bushfire mapping is from 2011, so that's 14 years ago. The guidelines for this changed in 2015 and now grassland is mapped as bushfire prone. That's the type of grassland that is on the site and on the neighbouring sites. So if Wingecarribee had their mapping up to date, this entire block would be bushfire prone, as would all the blocks around it. So no bushfire assessment has been done by the proponent, none has been addressed by the Department in looking at it, I don't think it's even been brought up by Council in their objections to it. Compare Goulburn nearby and every area of grassland is mapped.

15 To go with that, the proposed landscape plan shows bushland planted to within 6 metres of the building with flammable trees like eucalyptus sideroxylon, which would trigger a much higher bushfire attack. Generally within that distance on my projects I'm seeing bushfire attack levels of BAL 40 or higher and that pulls it out of compliance with the planning for bushfire protection if that mapping was applied as it should be. I'm only about halfway through my list here so I'll skip forward because bell's rung.

25 **MR MILLS:** Yes, you're already at six minutes so if you could try and wrap it up with a few points. If you've got it in writing, please do submit it and we'll be able to read it at leisure as well.

30 **MR RYALL:** I'll put this on my submission, absolutely. The other points were just the errors and omissions in the documentation by the proponent and the lack of due diligence in the Department of Planning assessment report addressing these. I do this kind of due diligence for potential architectural projects every day. If these were my clients I'd be recommending that this is not the right site for this kind of project.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you very much. Any questions? Thank you, Tristan. Our next speaker is Duncan Wood.

40 **MR DUNCAN WOOD:** Good morning all. My presentation is called The Sunk Cost Fallacy or It's the Environment, Stupid. It's a drama in six acts. There would be no intermission.

45 Act One. The die is cast. In 2017 the Chinese government introduced a ban on import to China of most plastic waste. This applied to Australia. An entity in China realised that the waste was still being produced and there could be an opportunity to develop a large scale plastic recycling facility in Australia. Let's call it a factory, that's what it is. The entity has no previous experience of plastic waste recycling of any scale.

Act Two. Quick, find a site. We know little about the site assessment and acquisition. We do not know who advised the entity on site selection. They did pick the wrong one. Site is testament – is a particularly important influencing factor in how a developer may proceed. How do I know this? I’ve been in practice as an architect and latterly as a site assessment consultant since 1985. That’s 39 years. The last 18 of which have been solely involved in projects in Australia with a vast majority in New South Wales. These projects definitely fit the definition of a major project with build costs in the range 800 million to 3.5 billion. Most are now operating after approval through the DPHI or DPHI, as was, was granted. We have happy clients and we get repeat work. Great stuff.

The reason we get approvals is that we carry out due diligence. We painstakingly look at site constraints. First step, is it a suitably zoned site? Next step, if we test the potential for the capacity for the site and if the client gives the go ahead, we put together a business case to purchase and then develop the land. We use tier one consultants for design of the premises and planning consultants and often planning lawyers.

Next step is to put together a descriptive set of documentation and then we go and meet with the local council. We take their feedback and ponder. We may then abandon the project, work on the project. Cost to the client at this point is about \$350,000. There may also be exclusivity payments to the entity selling the land. This could be in the order of \$4 million, money all gone. All the people employed by the client are trusted, qualified and have extensive experience in this type of project. We then move to the next site and repeat. Demand is great and this is the data centre market.

Act Three. SEPP state significant development. Given the size (value and capacity of the proposal) the assessment needs to be dealt with under this legislation. The SEPP also applies to data centres. The applicant presents a preliminary scheme and is issued a SEARs. This lists all the required documentation to be provided and agencies to be consulted prior to a formal lodgement of the application. Over time the pro forma SEARs has been revised or refined, sorry, for certain types of development, data centres being one. No such dedicated SEARs has been created for plastics recycling facilities. I would suggest it may be time for this.

Act Four. Technology. The vast majority of data centres utilise lithium batteries of backup power. These are contained in computer racks inside data halls. Typically there are 650 or so racks in each hall. These halls are fire separated from the rest of the building by fire rated walls and floors above and below. Fire rated doors give access for personnel. High density water sprinklers are installed to deal with any fire, even though the lithium batteries have safety cut outs. If the sprinklers are activated, then the entire volume of water discharged into the hall is contained within dedicated storage tanks for specialist removal. No contaminated water can leave the site. Each hall is about 1,500 square metres in area.

The proposal we’re looking at is to store a giant volume of plastic waste in which there may be old lithium batteries. The size of the factory will require modelling

of a fire scenario by a specialist fire engineer. Distances for escape by occupants are two or three times of those specified in the Building Code of Australia. The roof is lightweight, so a major fire will cause a catastrophic collapse of the structure. The fire will be a runaway event. The brigade will valiantly attack the fire. This is plastic material. Millions of litres of water will drain naturally from the site, contaminating the adjoining land and the heavily contaminated water – gravity is very efficient and the water will enter the waterways.

Act Five. WTF. The application was accepted and the rest is history. How many people’s lives have been negatively affected by the acceptance of this half-developed set of diagrams and quasi-technical reports? Why did the assessment take four years? There’s a phrase for this: sunk cost fallacy.

Final act. Act Six. Not on our watch. We will never accept this proposal for the Southern Highlands. We will never abide by the process that deliberately disenfranchises what we know to be right for our community. This project would rip the heart out of our community, notwithstanding the contamination of precious drinking water. As they say in Moss Vale, [unintelligible 01:19:38]. Not the right site. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you. Any questions? No. Thank you.

MR WOOD: Love some questions.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Duncan. We’ll move on. Our next speaker is Julia Zemiro. Welcome Julia.

MS JULIA ZEMIRO: Hi everyone. I want to acknowledge the First Nations custodians of the lands on which we are all meeting and speaking from today. It’s normal to care. It’s human to care and to question. What happens in our backyard reflects on what happens in our state and in our country it matters. My name is Julia Zemiro. I’ve lived in Bowral for 10 years. I love the Southern Highlands. I’ve got dear friends who live in Moss Vale and my aunt is in a nursing home in Mittagong.

For the past 20 years I’ve visited regional towns all over the country, touring different shows as a performer. Nature’s all around you, there’s a lot more space, audiences are wonderful and in the last 20 years it’s been extraordinary to see how many of these regional centres have bloomed but are also at a risk from developments like this that will contaminate the environment and harm the surrounds, the air and the water. And this time, it’s on home ground.

It’s also extraordinary that we are at a point where we have to point out why it’s important to speak up about clean air and clean water but here we are. When’s enough enough? When do we speak up? Everyone has their moment where they wake up to a brutal reality. In this case it’s about the possibility that Australia’s second largest plastics refinery will be built on our doorstep. But it might have been about the 2020 fires. It might have been the coal seam fracking in the

highlands and I don't mean to conflate other events but when is enough enough? When do I, as an individual, we, as a community, decide enough is enough and when we have to speak out, protest, really read the fine print or demand actual detail in a report and understand what's at stake here? And indeed when do you, as human beings, the three of you, sitting on a commission reviewing this, decide within yourselves as you assess this report, when is enough enough?

Plasrefine is set to be built and operated, as we know, at the end of a residential road in the Southern Highlands. It's close to homes only 240 metres away and childcare with no buffer zone. The risk of fire is enormous, given the chemicals used in plastics reprocessing. Moss Vale does not have a permanent fire brigade nor the resources or equipment to fight a hazardous materials fire. With the trauma of devastating natural bushfires in 2020 still very strong in our memories and worsening conditions will make the possibility of natural fires flare again undoubtedly. We cannot afford man-made fire hazards so close to a residential area.

The site, as we know, sits across two riparian zones and creeks that feed into the Wingecarribee River and Sydney's water supply. We know, you know there are very real concerns for microplastics and forever chemicals entering waterways and the air.

Our local roads, already underperforming and under resourced, are not equipped to handle trucks operating 11 hours a day, five days a week. Even though new access roads can be built to take trucks northwards into the highway, who will police this? Who will check that these trucks don't intend to use more convenient residential roads? There are plenty of land south, southwest of Sydney that are zoned for general and heavy industry, far away from residences and waterways with better access roads and better fire management capabilities. In short, this is not the right site.

We need to ask the IPC how they can actually do their job with the report that was presented on Plasrefine. It has no actual detail on process or exact pollutants that will go into the environment via water or air. I don't understand how the IPC can analyse this when the report lacks so much detail for such a big project.

Climate action starts in the community and our community is standing up to the IPC and Planning Department to say this development is greenwashing. It's bringing hazardous industry to our environment that will impact human health. Can we look at our children and say we did nothing? Can we look at each other and say we did nothing? Today as I look at you, three human beings in front of me, I ask you, would you be comfortable with this being built in your backyard? This is not the right site.

You've heard from so many residents who are experts in their fields. You've also heard the emotion that people are feeling. That emotion is real and it counts. It takes courage to speak up, to step up and it will take courage from you as a commission, as human beings, who I am sure would never want this refinery in

your backyard, to step up because if you lived here, you would be joining us.
Thank you.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you very much, Julia. We do have a question if you could just wait.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** Julia just a question of clarification. You referred to what you thought were inadequacies in the report that's come to the panel. Can I just clarify, are you talking about the Department's assessment report or some other report?

15 **MS ZEMIRO:** I'm talking about the report that stands but I think you all know that there is really not enough detail in this. I mean I don't know what notes you're taking or what you're taking down, there must be repeated things all the time, but we can ask for more detail on this report.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. But I'm just clarifying, is it the report prepared by the Department of Planning? Is that the report you're referring to?

25 **MS ZEMIRO:** Yes.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. That's all I was asking.

35 **MS ZEMIRO:** Thank you.

40 **MR MILLS:** Thank you. Thank you, Julia. Our next speaker is Madeline Baker. Madeline's not available at this stage. Is David McDonnell available? Thank you, David.

45 **MR DAVID MCDONNELL:** Yes, good morning.

50 **MR MILLS:** Good morning. Please do go ahead.

55 **MR MCDONNELL:** Thank you so much. Good morning, Commission panel, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David McDonnell. I am opposed to the location of the Plasrefine proposal. It's not the right site. My presence in the area goes back five generations. I've worked in that area for the past 40 years and I live in Moss Vale. The flat land along the Wingecarribee River, approximately 1,000 metres to the north of this proposal used to be market garden. This whole shire is agricultural shire, we have beef farms, dairy farms and a large potato industry. We also grow many beautiful gardens including our Tulip Time, which attracts tourists from all around the world.

60 We do have industry here and my personal experience in some of these have shown to be environmentally focused. Our infrastructure for emergencies such as fire are not equipped to cope with a fire of the scale of a process facility of this size. This is a very legitimate argument as evidenced by fires in recycling facilities in Australia over recent history. And what of a full scale incident, there are over 100 employees, can they be catered for for a catastrophic fire of this magnitude?

5 But traffic concerns, the transport routes proposed are inadequate for the transport we have now. This is evidenced by the need for a bypass, already proposed over a very, very long period of time. And to run the amount of trucks proposed on the routes stated are both ill-informed and inappropriate for the infrastructure in place. The condition, verges and widths of said routes are not adequate for the volume, size of the vehicles the project will necessitate

10 There are 16 trains per day to Boral Cement to unload and then return to whence they came. Up to 15 minutes delay could be had for each train, times by eight and that equals 120 minutes per day causing traffic to be held up. This will cause trucks to bank up or as trucks will do, they will go on another route. The noise and congestion of 100 trucks per day equals 200 movements thundering through our villages, just seems to be nightmarish.

15 Water usage and wastewater are an important consideration and shouldn't be disregarded as our catchment infrastructure is water supply to more than 5 million people and this is causing anxiety as there are already facts to demonstrate our water hasn't been managed appropriately to date. And I'll refer you to the scientific report of Dr Wright during the Battle of Berrima, where they opposed the coal mine. When the platypus were tested, it had a very high level of PFAS in its liver.

20 There are a number of concerns regarding wind borne pollutants and the prevailing winds in the area proposed. These winds are predominantly but not limited to a westerly aspect however there are many days the westerly winds exceed 30 km/h and up to 100 plus km/h. These winds would provide the means to pollute a vast area of housing, schools, hospitals and the Sydney water catchment.

25 Wingecarribee wetlands are home to a rare endangered dragonfly, *petalura gigantea* is an ancient bog dweller and it's endangered by human activity. It has a wingspan of 140 mm and a body as thick as a finger. They are heavier than a fairy wren and are brown and yellow in colour. They are one of only nine surviving species of dragonfly.

30 The social impacts. The Wingecarribee Shire have a long history of community. Our very own Mr Arthur Napper was a pioneer in developing the first ambulance crash wagons and the equipment to extricate the injured. Many community initiatives have benefited locals and visitors alike, examples of which are but not limited to the swimming pools, Bowral and District Hospital, Harbison Care and the astroturf Welby Hockey Centre and on it goes. Our shire is not in a state of stagnation, our unemployment rate is 3%, hardly that of a dying community.

35 My business is waste. We have been supplying skip bin services in the highlands for the past 26 years. I started recycling the waste that we manage and since then we have diverted many thousands cubic metres away from landfill. We need to recycle but we have to consider many aspects in business these days and a very important aspect is our environment. I'd like to thank this commission for the opportunity to voice my concerns regarding this proposal. This is not the right site.

Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you, David. No questions. We have Madeline available now. Madeline Baker. Madeline, are you there? No, we still seem to be having issues there. Okay, Madeline.

MS MADELINE BAKER: Yes.

MR MILLS: Terrific. Thank you. Please go ahead.

MS BAKER: Good morning. By way of background, I am a retired solicitor and I have practised law in public and private sectors in New South Wales and Queensland for over 40 years. I'm a former member of both NCAT and QCAT and I understand the application of law and the delivery of justice to citizens. So the opportunity you provide to review this decision is very much appreciated.

Like many others, I retired to the Southern Highlands for the outstanding amenity. We are here for the clean air, the magnificent waterways and our mountain climate. We do not want heavy polluting industry on this site. I have three issues I would like to address. The first is water. Our water is finite. What we have on this Earth is all that there is. To knowingly and recklessly threaten the very survival of our species and our planet in 2024 is beyond comprehension. This proposal will result in unacceptable risk to the quality of drinking water in our shire and to the catchment of Sydney water.

Number two, fire risk. By now you have heard many submissions on the fire risk that this project poses to our community. A recent count of fires at plastic recycling sorting and reprocessing facilities stands at 19 in the past four years. Some of these fires burned out of control for weeks. The toxic chemicals released into the atmosphere cannot be estimated but their impact will be known in the future by our children and grandchildren. This project will have an adverse effect on our residents' way of life, our surroundings and create a very genuine fear of the impact of fire and the lack of our firefighting resources.

Number three I'd like to address is known locally as The Mouse House. Australian BioResources Pty Ltd, known as The Mouse House, is owned and operated by the Garvan Institute. The proposed Plasrefine development is adjacent to The Mouse House. ABR Pty Ltd provides one of the most respected products to science and medical research communities around the world. Their state of the art facility at Moss Vale provides a highly secure, safe, clean environment for the breeding and housing of research mice. These mice generate important export dollars to the people of New South Wales, but more importantly they are recognised worldwide as the best medical research mice available.

I can speak directly to the importance of the work undertaken at ABR. I have had breast cancer twice in the last 15 years and I participated in medical research programs to isolate my specific gene and I consented to research performed by the Garvan Centre. My cancer is in remission due to the evidence-based research that

located a specific treatment tailored to my particular cancer. I'm grateful that our country delivers this first class medical research and treatment and I'm proud that the research was undertaken right here in Moss Vale.

5 There is strong evidence that microplastics act as hormone and endocrine
disruptors that can cause cancer. Ironically, we have one of the finest medical
research centres in the world sited adjacent to this proposal. The Mouse House
will be impacted by vibration, air quality and the risk of fire. I strongly urge the
panel to read and seriously consider the amended submission from ABR outlining
10 their concerns. In line with the IPC decision in Hume Coal, SSD7172 and
SSD7171, the potential for long-term and irreversible health impacts together with
the impacts the project has on our social and environmental values clearly
establishes this proposal is not in the public interest and it is not the right site.
Thank you.

15 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Madeline.

MS BAKER: Thank you.

20 **MR MILLS:** Our next speaker is Kay Wood.

MS KAY WOOD: I thank the panel for allowing this community this time to
speak to you. You have listened with such patience and great respect to all that
we've had to share. So I live around 2 km from the proposed site. I'm old enough
25 to remember a time before plastics, so what can I add?

I'd like to start by mentioning how for over a decade we waited for a bypass. We
were told it was going ahead but they have to go back to the drawing board
because they didn't allow for the two railway crossings and the flood zone. I feel
30 the same thing's happened here, that someone sitting in an office has not allowed
for the two creeks, a flood zone and houses.

I had many questions when I heard about this project and speakers over the last
few days have answered some but also raised more, questions that I hope you will
35 have the answers to before going and giving it the go ahead. Plasrefine are aware
that there is a concern that microplastics will escape. This is confirmed by them
including doors to the dock.

40 My first question is why would Plasrefine design a building taller than necessary
because they that would only add to their construction costs. Was it vital to be that
height? And 2 metre stacks sounds good for visual impact but the chimney on my
house is 2 metres above my roof, so is that sufficient for this type of facility, so
close to creeks and homes. Are the changes they have made endangering the
45 integrity of the facility? By making small changes to address the community
concerns, does this give Plasrefine the ability to blame the whinging residents
when things go wrong?

I can excuse the arrogance displayed when trying to get us on side, partly due to

cultural differences, but how will they handle concerns or problems in the future? With a deaf ear, I believe. They offer jobs. How many young people in Moss Vale dream of being a truck driver or working the floor of a toxic industry? Because they are the jobs they will offer.

5

Whilst the refinery at Kurnell was operational, they ensured the refinery fire brigade was well maintained and available 24 hours, seven days a week with appropriate equipment. Why doesn't Plasrefine have a fire brigade? On top of this, Plasrefine initially wanted 24/7 operation. How will they make a profit with such reduced hours? Why would they agree to such restrictions? Do they not care if it is profitable or are they hoping to simply sell it on? I do not have the answers to these and many more questions but I hope this panel gets detailed answers before making a decision.

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To me the biggest questions are why here and why now and I feel that these two questions are linked. We heard from Aldo and Stirling assuring us that we are in more danger from our carpet. Well, I choose wool carpet even though it costs more. I select cotton blouses even though I have to iron them. I do this because I can choose. If Plasrefine goes ahead, none of us will have the choice as to what is going into our water, our air or our agricultural businesses.

20

And this brings me to what I feel is the answer to why here and why now. If the federal government loses the next election, the generous state and federal grants for facilities such as this may just disappear. Did this leave Plasrefine insufficient time to locate an appropriate site? What happens to a grant if the next government cancels the project? If the facility is sold, does the grant get repaid or does that mean an \$88 million facility could be sold for a few million above what the investor put in, giving them a profit? It may simply be that our federal and state government leaders are hoping for a photo opportunity before the next election.

25

30

Yesterday was Remembrance Day and it brought to my mind how so many fought for Australia's freedom, yet now that freedom is being whittled away. The fact that you have given us a chance to have our say is the only thing separating this state significant policy from sounding like we live in a communist country. Yes, Plasrefine have made minor alterations to appease the community but they're refusing assistance to find a better site where they could build the huge facility with all its safety measures in place and operate 24/7 to their heart's content raises many questions. But there is just one answer: this is not the right site.

35

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MR MILLS: Thank you, Kay. We have a question.

MS WOOD: Yes.

45

MS MILLIGAN: I'm not sure I understood the point you were making for us about why is the building taller than required. I think I understood your next point. I think you were implying that the stacks were lower for visual amenity but may have increased the risk of air pollution. But can you just explain to me what your point was about this the size of the building and the height of the stacks?

5 **MS WOOD:** Yes. My understanding was the initial drawings for the building had it being a bit higher and I just wondered why they would do that if it wasn't necessary for the integrity of the building and the facility. And so I'm just worried if they've lowered it a bit, is there some underlying problem that may come up.

MS MILLIGAN: I see. Thank you.

10 **MS WOOD:** Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much, Kay. Our next speaker is Jessica Ryall. Jessica, welcome.

15 **MS JESSICA RYALL:** Hi. Thank you, Commissioners. My name is Jess and I live in Moss Vale, close to the proposed factory. I'm a mum to two young children and I work in residential architecture. We moved here in 2015, one of the first of the work from home families that now call this town home. Back then Moss Vale was a sleepy country town with vacant shops, cheap housing and silent streets. In 2019, we immediately secured a place of the daycare up on (redacted) for our son but by the time our daughter was born four years later, that wait list had exploded out to 20 months. It now sits at over two years wait list.

20
25 In my time here, I've seen the demographics in Moss Vale shift radically, especially in this corner of the town where it's safe, backyards are big and it's easy to commute into the city for work. The truth is this, the information you've been given about this community's demographics is wrong. Ethos Urban's social impact statement says that Moss Vale has a lower socioeconomic standing, a largely stagnant population and an aged community. Their 2021 based population projections estimate a laughable 20 additional residents per year here, totally ignoring this work from home revolution post-COVID.

30
35 Meanwhile, there is a 49 lot subdivision, application number 23/1110, currently under DA assessment right on the edge of the proposed factory's 1 km blast zone. There are an additional 21 lots completed on the new Horseshoe Lane, a mere 900 metres from the factory. Five have been put on the market so far, with two of those already sold. According to Ethos Urban's projections, these lots should take over one decade to sell, assuming three people per dwelling and zero growth elsewhere in town. Not a chance.

40 Median house prices in Moss Vale have risen 45.5% in the past five years, reaching a \$1 million median in July of this year. Moss Vale is in her renaissance, with new cafés and shops. Our excellent schools and parks and daycares are all at capacity. This town is filling with families. The signs are everywhere, bikes in front yards, a dropped baby sock out the front of the pharmacy, heads down in the library.

45 These and other inconsistencies from the application noticed by our community raise serious questions about the credibility of this entire enterprise. Much of what

we've seen and heard from these paid consultants seems designed to persuade rather than inform. Everything needs a rigorous fact check and not just by our community but by government. This is your job.

5 I am at a loss to understand why basic errors like this population stuff was blindly accepted as fact by the Department of Planning. And yet here we are, a few hundred metres away from my home, up the end of the road where my daughter's daycare sits, we have two smashed up old buses that stick out like alien forms in our green landscape, strange and shamefully unprofessional headquarters for what
10 is to come, a giant plastics facility that does not belong here.

If approved, the backdrop to my children's childhood would be the rumble of large trucks, a sprinkling of toxic microplastics and the constant threat of an
15 unstoppable chemical fire all day every day. My kids won't ever escape it. At home, at daycare or at school they will be within a few hundred metres of those smoke stacks. No more open bedroom windows on windy days, no more walking the pram through town. We don't have footpaths, thanks Council, so we walk and ride our kids bikes on the road, which would be dangerous with increased traffic from staff and most likely large trucks cutting through to avoid a level crossing.
20

I know firsthand what this life would be like. I grew up in Botany Bay Council right above the Orica groundwater contamination site, the worst case of groundwater pollution in Australia. We had rules when I was a kid. No digging in the garden. If you're outside playing and you get thirsty you come inside for a
25 drink. Don't drink out of any random taps that you find. Don't drink the bore water. The cleanup project that started in my childhood still runs today and if much of what we've already heard from these meetings is true, we could not just end up with contaminated groundwater, the air that we breathe may also be at risk and we cannot tell our children not to breathe the air. How long would this cleanup
30 take?

Many locals still don't know about this factory. Our old council was sacked for incompetence in May 2022 and we've only just gotten our democracy back in the
35 past few months. With no one to inform or lead us, we've been unable to organise until now. Make no mistake, what you have seen so far is just a fraction of the resistance to come if this proceeds. The science is not settled on what this facility and its potential outputs and fire risks will do to the families of Moss Vale or those in Wollondilly and Sydney who will ultimately drink the affected wastewater downstream. The precautionary principle applies.
40

You three sitting here today, your and your team's decision to approve or deny this factory may affect our kids for life. Andrew, Clare and especially you Janett, as a Director of Barnardos, you know that every child needs a champion and there is a whole town of children here begging you for help. Give this decision the
45 weight it deserves. The lives of my kids might indeed be in your hands. So I say no, not again, not this facility and not this site. For clean air, safe water and safe roads for all of our local kids and for mine, please.

I'll leave you with this. In the 1860s sir Joseph Bazalgette, a planner and engineer, was head of the project that would install London's first sewers. While he designed the sewers, Bazalgette calculated an overly generous diameter of pipe needed based on population. He then said, "We are only going to do this once and there is always the unforeseen" and he doubled the diameter of the pipes. If Bazalgette had used those smaller pipes, the city sewers would have overflowed in the 60s. Instead they've coped and they're still working today.

There is always the unforeseen but in this proposal I would argue that the potential for harm is entirely foreseeable. I can see it, you can see it, our entire community can see it. The stakes may be higher than we know. Be a Bazalgette and think ahead, not only for the foreseeable but also the unforeseen, for the duration of our lives and beyond, for the children of Moss Vale, our children. Please don't let them down. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Jessica. Questions? Thank you. Our next speaker is Jeremy Waters.

MR JEREMY WATERS: Good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the panel, so thank you for hearing what we all have to say. My name is Jeremy, our home is less than 2 km from the proposed site. The federal government aims to triple the plastic recycling rate by 2030. On the New South Wales government website, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, says, "Labor is driving the transition to a circular economy by 2030. It's good for the economy and great for the environment." This intent is admirable. The execution in this case is deplorable.

To simply plonk Australia's largest plastic recycling facility on unsuitable land and a two minute drive from Moss Vale's Main Street is not the way to achieve these outcomes. There are far too many what ifs associated with the site for it to be viable. All of these what ifs translate into undeniable risks that are irresponsible to ignore. What if there is a catastrophic fire on the site? What if bush fires threaten the site? What if the site is buffeted by the high winds that this area is prone to? What if children are forced to play inside on one of these pesky windy days? What if the Wingecarribee and indeed Sydney's water catchment is compromised?

What if local roads and infrastructure are not compliant with 100 heavy trucks rolling onto the site five days a week? What if local wildlife habitats are destroyed or threatened, at the very least? What if children must be pulled out of nearby schools and daycare centres? What if the work of the Garvan Institute is compromised? What if plans for the Innovation Park are then scuttled? What if the release of microplastics into the air and waterways threaten the long-term health of thousands? What if the stress felt by residents creates deep mental health problems throughout the community? What if in 10 or 20 years, as technology progresses and we know more, this type of recycling plant becomes redundant?

Many speakers before me have excavated these what ifs, these risks with precision and substance. We have received no cast iron guarantees or foolproof plans to

eliminate them. Indeed, on this site it seems impossible to mitigate, let alone eliminate many of these risks. To then move ahead despite this litany of challenges would be dangerous and defy logic. This site on unsuitable land and a mere 150 metres from residential property cannot be turned into the frontline of this battle against plastic waste.

In their decision to recommend approval for GHD and Plasrefine's development, it seems that the DPHI have been caught up in the rush to meet the quotas I mentioned earlier. By ignoring the glaring discrepancies in the proposal, they have prioritised targets and political capital over the safety and wellbeing of this town and their surrounding region. There is a stark contrast here in what's at stake for the people of Moss Vale and the consortium of GHD Plasrefine. For the people of Moss Vale, their way of life, their physical health, the health of the rural landscape and the future of their children is at stake. For GHD Plasrefine, what's at stake is money.

If this enormous project doesn't go ahead on this site, the GHD Plasrefine consortium will be okay. They'll live to fight another day, they'll eventually build somewhere else, hopefully on a more appropriate site. But if this project does get the go ahead, then the disruption and trauma to the lives of Moss Vale residents will be profound, indeed catastrophic. On one side of this ledger you have plastics, politics and profit margins. On the other side, you have people.

As many speakers have acknowledged, New South Wales and Australia need robust and comprehensive recycling policies. The challenges our planet faces from the poisons of plastic waste are real and they need to be effectively addressed. This is not in dispute. But 74-76 Beaconsfield Road, Moss Vale is not the place to do it. There are far too many things that could go wrong on this site and the price to pay if and when they do is far, far too high. Thank you very much for listening.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much, Jeremy. No questions. Our next speaker has cancelled and so we are not due to hear from Nicholas Roberta until 12:20, so we will take a break for half an hour and back at 20 past 12. Thank you.

SHORT BREAK

MR MILLS: ... start. And is Nicholas Roberta available? Nicholas, are you there? Hello Nicholas, are you there?

MR NICHOLAS ROBERTS: I am, can you hear me?

MR MILLS: We can, thank you very much. Welcome. Over to you.

MR ROBERTS: Thank you. Thank you. Good afternoon commissioners, my name is Nick Roberts and I'm a Moss Vale local, a husband and a father of two kids. My family and I moved to Moss Vale three years ago. We moved to create a healthier outdoor life for our kids and ourselves. However, the Plasrefine proposal puts this lifestyle at risk for ourselves and all other Moss Vale and Southern

Highlands families.

5 I strongly object to the recommended approval of the Plasrefine facility. After
careful review of the Department's assessment, I believe there is significant
failures in the evaluation process that warrant the rejection of this proposal. Like
the fact that the proposed site is just 2 kilometres from the Moss Vale town centre
and sits on the waterways that feeds into both Highlands and Sydney's water
supply. Or the fact that it is less than 650 metres from a childcare centre, and
within very close proximity to five schools which place these kids at risk of an
10 explosion, a fire or a failure in the water and air filtration processes. These are
material risks that cannot be overlooked.

15 But the thing that I wanted to focus on today is the Department's reliance on the
Ethos Urban Report which undertook the social impact assessment. The social
impact assessment is reliant on ABS census data from 2021, which reports that the
age structure of Moss Vale is an aging population. This is not reflective of reality,
and more recent data should be obtained to make an informed decision on this
sector.

20 The socio-economic status and the fabric of Moss Vale has changed in the three
years my family has lived here. Let alone the four to five years since the Plasrefine
proposal timeline was commenced. The social impact assessment is silent to all
the new housing developments going on in Moss Vale, of which the New South
Wales Government has had a hand in approving, including the 1,200-dwelling
25 development at Ashbourne Estate.

The land has been sold largely to young families most of which, like us, are
relocating to Moss Vale for more space and more affordable housing. From an
anecdotal point of view, in our street alone we are friendly with four other couples,
30 two of which also have two kids. The other night we went to a fair at the Moss
Vale Public School and bumped into three other couples with their kids, and we
would have seen at least 50 more.

35 The face and fabric of Moss Vale has changed in our time here and is currently
changing. We have five high-quality cafes that are packed on the main street, two
pubs, a wine bar, and a new pub with an outdoor beer garden currently under
construction. So to call Moss Vale an aging population is simply untrue, and
overlooks the fact that Moss Vale is undergoing fundamental change and growth.

40 Therefore, the social impact assessment is not based on reliable data which the
Department can reach a decision to approve this development, and that Moss Vale
is not a place with an aging population to justify approval of a hazardous
development.

45 There is no getting around the fact that Plasrefine is not the site. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Nicholas. Christine McGuigan is our next speaker.
Hello Christine, welcome.

MS CHRISTINE MCGUIGAN: Hi. I'd like to thank the Commission for taking the time to hear the voices of those opposed to the imposition of Plasrefine on not only Moss Vale but ultimately anyone who relies upon our catchment area for their drinking water.

I'm particularly grateful to be treated here with respect and accorded the opportunity to express my disbelief and disappointment in the Department of Planning in designating this monstrosity as an SSD, and in the Minns Government in this exercise in greenwashing. This respect in the Commission is in stark contrast to the dismissive and I would say contemptuous treatment we have been given by the proponent and various paid consultants over the last four years, when they didn't thought to consider us at all.

Those of us who were corralled into the community engagement sessions in the Moss Vale Senior Citizens Centre will recall how we were treated like naughty children, unable to ask questions or have even the most basic interaction at these engagement sessions.

I live 1.4 kilometres to the east from "not the right site." So, those westerly winds we all know about will deliver microplastics direct to my door. Perhaps that's why GHD refer to residents as "receivers".

Three generations of my family live in the Highlands, going back to 1980. Our family's future is here in the clean green Southern Highlands, as shown in my background, which is also a different 1.4 kilometres from "not the right site."

We are energised by our young new councillors. We're excited about job opportunities in the SHIP. A hazardous industry almost on our doorstep releasing microplastics into our air, soil and waterways is not part of that future.

The panel has asked this morning about objections to the Department Report and asked for clarification. But I noted in the Department Report – and this is a quote – "The Department acknowledges the public's concern regarding microplastics in the environment, however, it is satisfied these can be restricted to an acceptable level." What is an acceptable level – do we know? How are they reliably restricted? Have we not learned from the irreversible damage PFAS has wreaked in the soil, air and water at Richmond Air Base, at Wreck Bay near Jervis Bay, and most recently in Medlow Baths. To name just a few.

These are not rhetorical questions. I want answers. An acceptable level of what? Endocrine disorders? Kidney/testicular cancer? Oh, and the report also encourages the proponent, and this is a quote – "To include consideration of new technology for the reduction of microplastic in wastewater." End of quote. "Consideration" doesn't sound like a compelling reason to make any changes. It's like leaving the fox in charge of the henhouse.

GHD are experts in cleaning up PFAS, according to Dr Mark Bowman who's a

technical advisor for GHD and a consultant on Plasrefine. And in his address at the Cleanup Conference 2022 in Adelaide, which is available on a podcast called Believe it or not – TalkingPFAS, Dr Bowman’s key takeaway message is – and this is the quote: “It is fine to use a chemical that has been approved for commercial use, but we need to ensure that unlike some challenges in PFAS where they have been dispersibly released and haven’t controlled while we have used those chemicals.” That’s the takeaway.

I’m still quoting from Dr Bowman: “We need to really not let those chemicals out in the environment in the first place. It often doesn’t matter what the chemical is; we don’t want it in our drinking water, we don’t want them in our food. We want to have safe breathable air. We want to have safe drinking water and it is best to ensure that we are not releasing chemicals into areas that we are using for food and water.” End of quote from the GHD consultant on Plasrefine. Hypocrisy – there it is.

Now, I intended to make quite a different speech at the submission here today, expressing my sadness that the cures that the Garvan Institute Mouse House is searching for may never eventuate. Expressing my strong belief that Plasrefine will never ever, ever operate with social licence in this tight-knit community.

My apprehension is also about the inevitability of a devastating fire here, such as has occurred only last week in South [unintelligible 02:37:05] at a similar recycling facility. And my incandescent rage that we have to go through all of this again and again and again and again, when all three levels of government, the local and extended community oppose it on compliance and commonsense.

And this is what I want to finish with. I had a conversation yesterday driving my six and eight-year-old local grandchildren to school. They asked me what all the “not the right site” banners and signs are about that we saw as we drove. I gave an age-appropriate answer: that we were worried about problems with clean air and clean water. Out of the mouths of babes, with no priming, my six-year-old grandchild sitting behind me said, “But Gran, won’t the owners be drinking that water too?” And that’s the question I’d like to leave hanging, for the commissioners and everyone who drinks water from the Sydney catchment area to consider. Won’t you be drinking this water too?

Thank you for listening to me.

MR MILLS: No questions?

MS MILLIGAN: No, thank you.

MS CLARE SYKES: No, thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you. Our next speaker is Dr Julian Duc. Jacqueline. Welcome.

DR JACQUELINE DUC: Good afternoon. Thank you, commissioners, for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. My name is Dr Jacqueline Duc. I'm a local community member, mother of two, and a proud member of Doctors for the Environment Australia, who I am speaking on behalf of today.

5

The DEA is the leading medical voice on health and climate in Australia. Our purpose is to protect our communities' health through advocacy and care of our environment. We believe that our physical and mental health depends on the health of our environment. Clear air, clean water, rich biodiversity, productive soils, nutritious food, and a stable climate.

10

Commissioners, over the past two weeks you've heard how the current nominated site of Plasrefine potentially threatens each of these key tenets directly. From dozens of devastated council and community members, experts in the field of waste management, air pollution, law and planning, environment science, medicine and nursing.

15

You have heard the personal stories of parents, grandparents, early childhood workers, and young people concerned, if not terrified, of the potential unacceptable risks to human health and our local environment and the social and psychological wellbeing of our community if the Plasrefine facility is approved at its current site.

20

To be clear, the DEA is by no means against plastic recycling facilities. But placing the largest plastics facility in the country five times larger than any other currently existing facility, less than 10 metres from riparian waterways that feed directly into Sydney's drinking water catchment. And less than 150 metres from residential homes and the Garvan's Australian Bioresources Facility, with no adequate fire buffer zone. It's simply not a safe or viable option.

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Earlier today, one of my colleagues, Dr Jacqueline Jones, spoke about the potential risks of microplastic exposure and long-term health sequelae, including cardiac, respiratory, hormonal and reproductive illnesses, dementia and cancer malignancies.

35

Madeline Baker spoke earlier about the potential serious impacts of noise and vibration disruption on the delicate breeding cycles of the ABR's research mice. The ABR is an internationally renowned state-of-the-art facility for critical research into cancer, mental illness, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

40

As a palliative care doctor caring for patients suffering from these illnesses every day, I cannot emphasise how precious and important the Garvan and ABR's work is, and how we cannot afford to jeopardise this research facility. Our very future may depend upon it.

45

We are not here today to wear noise-cancelling headphones and only discuss best case scenarios to suit our purpose. Unfortunately, as a realistic palliative care doctor, I am focused on the worst possible but "what if" scenarios. Of extreme

fires, the malfunction of air or water filtration systems, of unplanned but potentially disastrous leaks.

5 As we know in health care, as we do in life, there is no such thing as an infallible system. And based on the evidence we have seen presented from experts in the field these past two weeks, the likelihood of an equipment malfunction or a devastating fire is not a question of if, but when.

10 In medicine, the role of a clinical ethics committee is to hear all the evidence from each and every stakeholder. To openly discuss the potential risks and benefits of each possible scenario. And make a recommendation based upon this. Seeking to find the solution with maximum benefit, minimum potential harm.

15 If we choose to ignore the potential risks and build this facility on this particular site, we will not be able to look back in the event of a disaster and say that we could not have foreseen this. We could not say that we have made the absolute best decision with the information on hand at the time. We could have no moral peace in the aftermath of having potentially caused avoidable human suffering.

20 There are safer sites for this facility to be built on. There is no other way to look at the statement of truth. I am certain that we have the knowledge, the skills and expertise, the humanism and compassion to move forward in a constructive and collaborative way, while minimising the very real potential risks to human life. To find a way forward that respects our local environment, addresses our waste issues, yet still safeguards our health and our humanity, to find a different safer site.

30 To our Independent Planning Commission, you are our clinical ethics committee. We are looking to you to please help make the right choice for our community. Primum non nocere – first, do no harm. This is not the right site. But let's work together to find the right site. Thank you.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Jacqueline. Any questions? No? Okay, thank you very much. Our next speaker is Ghania Dib. Welcome.

40 **MS GHANIA DIB:** Thank you. Good afternoon members of the Independent Planning Commission. I am a local lawyer and a mother of four. Like other members of the public, my family stands to be adversely impacted by the proposed plastic recycling facility.

45 My first experience of the Highlands was in 2000. I remember being captivated by the sheer beauty of the Highlands and it was no surprise that my family and I eventually made the move. Our youngest daughter attends a local school that stands to be adversely impacted by the plastic recycling facility. Many families such as our own would not have considered the Highlands as our forever destination, had there been a local plastic recycling facility when we considered making the move.

When I first heard about the proposed plastic recycling facility and the impacts of microplastics, I was immediately reminded of a case I came across over 15 years ago. That matter involved Tasmanian devils being riddled with cancerous tumours to their faces. Many of them died a painful death. Ultimately, there was an estimated 80–90% decline in the population of Tasmanian devils. One of the reports we came across showed a link between the tumours and the contamination of the Tasmanian devils’ drinking water by pesticides and poisons used in the local plantation forests. The potential cancer-causing effects of the chemicals had been ignored. Much to the detriment of the Tasmanian devils’ population.

The reality is that a plastic recycling facility will flood our environment with microplastics, thereby affecting our air and water ways. We are currently at the crossroads of a decision that will, similar to the Tasmania devils story, have very real ramifications for the wellbeing of our local flora and fauna. Particularly our local platypi and micro-bat populations, the latter of which is on the Red List for Endangered Species.

I would hate to see a situation in 15 years’ time where we look back and realise that we were responsible for the development of new and totally preventable diseases. I am here today to say that we need to be the voice of reason. And we need to take very seriously the responsibility that comes with being custodians of our local environment.

Studies have also linked microplastic exposure to various health issues for us humans, including endocrine disruption, immune dysfunction, neurodegenerative diseases, and interference with hormone function. All of these conditions have been linked to a higher incidence of cancer. Those of us most at risk are our children. There are far too many examples of developments such as the proposed plastic recycling facility resulting in children suffering from an increased incidence of cancer and health issues.

There is no price on this Earth that we can place on our children’s wellbeing and good health. Whatever economic benefits our government stands to reap from the Plasrefine development will pale in comparison to the medical issues that our children and even ourselves are at risk of developing.

I also remind the Commission of Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children, which states: “Children have the right to live a life, a full life, and government should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.” The emphasis on healthily.

The ramifications of a plastic recycling facility are in direct conflict with our government’s obligations towards our children. As a lawyer, I spent a lot of my time helping families separate, and I’m privy to the reasons that marriages fall apart. One of the recurring themes is the adverse impact of ill health and stress on a family. This includes chronic health issues and cancers. The very same diseases that a plastic recycling facility is associated with.

My genuine concern is that we will end up with a domino effect where an increased incidence of ill health issues results in an increased incidence of marital issues and breakdowns. Our current family law system is struggling to keep up. Partly due to the increase in divorces since the COVID pandemic. Indeed,
5 according to the ABS, 2021 has got the highest incidence of divorces recorded since 1976. And it is no coincidence that this was partly due to families being coupled up indoors and having little respite from each other.

This gets me to my final point. I read somewhere that one way to reduce the risk of microplastic ingestion was to spend less time outdoors. Such a proposal is not
10 only unrealistic, it totally ignores the reasons why many of us have made the move from the city to the country. The wellbeing of our children and indeed our own wellbeing depends on our ability to spend unfettered time in the great outdoors.

We are blessed to live in a part of the world that offers us a smorgasbord of outdoor experiences. Placing a local plastic recycling facility in the midst of the Highlands is tantamount to infecting that smorgasbord with salmonella, rendering it unusable and hazardous to all.

As a member of the local community, I reiterate that a high risk, hazardous manufacturing factory will rip the heart of our local community and pollute our air and water ways with repercussions that will endure for generations to come.

I implore the Commission to prioritise our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our children and environment. Simply put, the Southern Highlands is not the right site. Thank you for your time.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Ghania. I'm just checking, we may need to take a five-minute break. We have delays with some of our speakers.

SHORT BREAK

MR MILLS: Our next speaker is Geraldine Hessey. Welcome. Geraldine. Can you hear us?

MS GERALDINE HESSEY: Hello.

MR MILLS: Hello. You can. We can hear you. Please go ahead. Thank you.

MS G HESSEY: Would you like me to start now?

MS MILLS: Yes, please.

MS G HESSEY: Okay, fabulous, thank you. Hi, my name is Geraldine Hessey. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I really wanted to talk to you from a few perspectives. Firstly as a concerned parent, a local business owner, and proud member of our Southern Highlands community, to express my strong opposition to the proposed Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility in Moss Vale.

Our family/extended family has lived in the Southern Highlands for over 20 years, and we love it, and we all know it's renowned for its natural beauty and tranquil environment. Personally, my family, we moved here four years ago, and we live in Bowral. And we moved from Sydney for the area's clean air, calm environment, and the vibrant sense of community, to raise our two young children in this wonderful country regional environment.

We're therefore highly concerned with the proposed site for this plastics recycling facility in Beaconsfield, Moss Vale. This area is a community hub of activity. So, I just thought I would help to bring this area to life for you to show how important it is to our family and our extended family as well.

So, we have a 14-year-old son, (redacted), who loves sport and plays basketball in the next street to where this facility would be in Parkes Street at the Moss Vale Basketball Stadium. He loves his sport, he's been playing there for four years, he's now a referee, and we are there weekly. Just down the road from there, we've regularly bought beautiful fresh clean flowers from a small flower farm in Beaconsfield Road. We also take our beautiful little mini-schnauzer, Pepper, to get groomed at a small business in Beaconsfield Road. They have a beautiful open space with horses, and my children love to pat them every time they visit.

My son also loves all sports, but he goes to (redacted), and most weekends all of the families, grandparents and pets are down at the local playing fields, particularly one Brayfields Oval which is just down the road from Oxley College across the Wingecarribee River. So, this open playing field is right on the beautiful Wingecarribee River, but will only be a few kilometres as the crow flies from this proposed facility, which just sends shivers down my spine.

As a parent, I am deeply troubled by the potential health risks this facility may pose to our children and us. The increased heavy vehicle traffic near the local schools, local sporting facilities, and residential areas raises safety concerns for us. Additionally, the possibility of air and water pollution from the facility threatens the health of our most vulnerable residents.

The facility's 24/7 operations would introduce air pollution, significant noise, traffic, potential environmental and safety hazards into our daily lives, posing unacceptable risks to our community's wellbeing. Furthermore, our local regional economy thrives on small businesses and tourism. So, we own a local business called Burnt Co. and we have a studio in Bowral. So, we focus our business on sustainability with our product range, and one of the main attractions to buy our range, locally handmade range, over imported goods, is that it is handmade in Bowral.

Now, the Southern Highlands has an important brand per say, and is renowned for clear air, healthy lifestyle, and a true regional community feel. The introduction of a large industrial facility could tarnish this positioning, deterring visitors and disrupting the charm that attracts tourists to our region. The increased traffic

congestion and potential environmental degradation may discourage patrons from supporting local enterprises like ours, and essentially threatening our livelihoods.

5 Tourism is key to the continued growth and viability of our region and our business. The Southern Highlands is renowned for its natural beauty and tranquil environment, drawing visitors near and far. We participate in many local events, outdoor events, with the most significant being the Annual Tulip Time Festival. This actually attracts tens of thousands of visitors every year to see our beautiful, clean and colourful tulip flower displays.

10 These events are integral to the community's identity and economy. And the establishment of a massive industrial facility contradicts the essence of our community and the fresh, clean, unique environment we have to offer. The potential for pollution and environmental degradation could tarnish our reputation as a premier tourist destination, leading to the decline ultimately in visitor numbers, and ultimately economic downturn for our region.

20 So, in conclusion, while I acknowledge the importance of recycling and waste management and sustainability, the proposed Plasrefine facility is just not the right location. I urge you to please consider the long-term implications on our future generations, all local residents, our local businesses, and our unique environment, and stop this development. We will never accept this proposal for the Southern Highlands. Thank you.

25 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Geraldine. Any questions? No? Our next speaker is Brigid Kennedy. Brigid.

30 **MS BRIGID KENNEDY:** Hello. Thank you for taking my submission. I'm President of Grow Southern Highlands. We are a business chamber that specialises in ag and equine, agritourism and the visitor economy. I'm also Co-Chair of Ag and Equine for the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group. And I was a member of the Community Reference Panel on Economic Development advising council on industry.

35 And I would like to speak opposing this development. And I would request that before imposing a proposal so extreme on our community as Plasrefine, that the IPCN needs to be aware of the work and the direction that the whole Southern Highlands business and rural community has done in its determination of its first and best use for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park, of which Plasrefine seeks to be part of.

40 The state funded by [BLERF(?) 03:03:01], Wingecarribee Council and the Destination Southern Highlands Surround South, the Southern Highlands Agribusiness and Equine Industry did a summary plan for the future for this area. This is, I might add, a 15-year culmination of the whole-of-industry, the whole of the region, of state tourism, and it was a significant work. And the fact that this Plasrefine just not dovetail into what we have already determined for ourselves and our future.

5 So, the study sought to work the Southern Highlands role in feeding our biggest city as the closest rural lands to do so. It sought to explore its capacity given it is largely a hundred-acre blocks. And the findings landed on beef, its prime focus, and on agribusiness transport hub.

The Moss Vale saleyards form part of the SHIP. I hope you understand what SHIP means. SHIP is the Southern Highlands Innovation Park.

10 **MR MILLS:** Yes.

15 **MS KENNEDY:** And that's near the expansion of that endeavour of the saleyards from part of the outcomes that sought for SHIP. You will see from our report, which we have actually uploaded, how much the reliance on our clean and green image forms part of our future branding.

20 The second part of the study has highlighted the importance of equine to our community, and Grow commissioned a study to measure the GRP and the land bank for this sector. The findings are significant.

25 It is unfortunate in timing that the Wingecarribee SHIP plan has not come out of council yet and is still in draft. But having been part of the architecture of that plan, and our white paper that we have provided to council, it's contributed greatly to the outcome that the lion's share of SHIP land mass is to extend to that economy of the equine industry.

30 The Southern Highlands industry equine development white paper has been put up on your site and I do entreat you to read that. It has significant findings, and it is through exceptionally engaged surveys, public forums, and it is a true account of the aspiration of this region, that that area is designated for that.

35 The attraction then for that sector to come through with the Plasrefine will be severely impeded. And we consider it quite incompatible. I would also like to state that our understanding of the LEP is that large storage facilities, which this would be encompassing, is prohibited use in this zoning, and we don't understand why New South Wales Planning has not seen to have considered our LEP.

40 So, we implore at the very least that the IPCN wait for the finalisation of the WSC SHIP development plan and that our preference is of course the rejection of this proposal. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Brigid.

45 **MS KENNEDY:** Do you have any questions?

MR MILLS: No questions?

MS SYKES: No.

MR MILLS: No questions. Thank you very much.

MS KENNEDY: Thank you.

5

MR MILLS: Our next speaker is Isabelle Hessey. Isabelle.

MS ISABELLE HESSEY: Hello.

10

MR MILLS: Hello. Welcome.

MS I HESSEY: It's good to be here.

MR MILLS: We're ready to hear from you.

15

MS I HESSEY: All right-y. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Issy and I'm speaking today as a young person from the Southern Highlands. I feel I have a duty to speak up on important matters that are discussed by adults but affect younger generations just as much.

20

I have grown up here. I have seen it all. The clean air, the open spaces, the sense of community that makes this place so special. But right now, I'm here to tell you why I so strongly oppose against the Plasrefine Plastics Recycling Facility. I know the world is changing, and I understand we need solutions for things like plastic waste and recycling. But just because something sounds like it can help the environment doesn't mean it's the right solution, especially not here.

25

You see, the Southern Highlands is more than just a place on the map for us young people. It's where we live, grow up and experience life. I've spent a large portion of my life here and I care deeply about keeping it the way it is. The thought of a massive industrial facility like Plasrefine coming here really worries me.

30

For a start, we all know how busy Beaconsfield Road is, and the surrounding areas can get. It's a hub of activity, and putting a recycling facility there just doesn't make sense. There are schools, sporting clubs, local businesses, and homes, that are right in the heart of that area. If you think about it, the increase in truck traffic alone will make it so much harder for people to get around. I mean, just imagine what it would be like to walk or ride my bike down Beaconsfield Road with huge trucks driving by all the time? That's a huge safety risk.

40

But it's not just the traffic. I also have been thinking about what this could do to our health and the environment. There are lots of kids in the area, and a lot of people who are active and spend time outdoors. If this facility opens, we could see air pollution, water contamination and noise pollution. That's not just a theory; it's happened before in other towns where similar plants have been built. We cannot risk our health or the health of our younger siblings.

45

The thing is, we don't just live here. We love it here. We're lucky to have such a

5 beautiful place to call home. But this whole idea of bringing a giant industrial plant into the mix doesn't sit with what the Southern Highlands stands for. Our town is all about its natural beauty, its fresh air, and that calm and peaceful lifestyle. It's where people come for the scenery, the hiking, the amazing farmer's markets, and the little family-owned businesses. A factory like Plasrefine just doesn't belong here. It goes against everything that makes this place so unique.

10 My family, like many others, is part of the small business community here. I know how important tourism is to our region. The Tulip Time Festival, for example, is a huge draw for visitors. But if a big industrial facility sets up shop right in the middle of our peaceful town, how many people are going to want to come here anymore? Who is going to want to visit a town that's dealing with pollution and traffic jams? People come to the Southern Highlands for fresh air and wide open spaces.

15 We can't let that be ruined for the sake of something that might not even be the right solution for our waste problem. And it's not just about the environment. It's about the future. We, the next generation, are the ones who will inherit this place. If we allow things like this to happen, we're letting go of the very thing that makes the Southern Highlands special. We're letting go of the chance for future generations like myself to enjoy this place in the way we've been so lucky enough to now.

20 And so we will never accept this proposal for the Southern Highlands. And we will never abide by a process that deliberately disenfranchises what we know to be right for our community. I know recycling is important, and I'm all for finding better ways to manage waste. But there are so many better ways to do it, than by building a massive facility in the middle of our community.

30 I'm asking you to think long and hard about what this will mean for all of us, not just now but in the years to come. We need to protect what we have, not risk it for the sake of short-term [unintelligible 03:11:24]. Thank you.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Isabelle.

MS I HESSEY: Thank you.

40 **MR MILLS:** No questions? No. Thank you. Our next speaker is Rebecca Reidy. Rebecca, welcome. Can you hear?

MS REBECCA REIDY: Good afternoon, commissioners. Can you hear me?

MR MILLS: We can, thank you.

45 **MS REIDY:** I'm speaking today as a local resident to voice my concerns, and I'll focus on the social impacts of this project.

We are a small community that's been rapidly growing, and you may have noticed

the community spirit and friendliness when you visited. We are people who like to grow veggies and have chooks in our backyard, maybe a bee hive. I didn't think it was quite ethical to put up a slideshow with images of our young people, however, that's what I'd like you all to imagine. People like Issy that we just heard from.
5 And our younger ones.

Imagine the children at the childcare centre on Beaconsfield Road playing outside. The joy of the children at Moss Vale Primary School Country Fair. Imagine the Moss Vale Agriculture Show full of families. The local dance school concerts, the
10 scout group camp out, footballs training at the oval, young students at Moss Vale Agricultural High School.

Maybe some further images, some further images of Moss Vale community gardens, welcoming locals with disabilities. The volunteers that keep Meals on
15 Wheels delivering. The crowd gathered for park run at Southern Highlands botanic gardens. You might look up some of these organisations to get some visuals for yourself, or just imagine them in your mind.

I've got this bear sitting here with me. Just a reminder that we can look to, to
20 remember our little ones that will be impacted by these big decisions that we make now. How will all these lives – oops, sorry – how will all these lives be impacted by a plastics factory that is not at the right site?

These people that live, play and work together generously supporting and caring
25 for each other. Now, recently residents have been stretched and had their resilience tested, worrying about the impact of a plastics factory in the neighbourhood. Too close to homes, water sources, agricultural land, and community services.

What will it mean? Can we eat the eggs from our backyard chickens when it's this
30 close? What does it mean for local pasture-raised meat? The honey? The garden produce? How close is too close to the factory, the wastewater, the emissions? In the August wind gusts that roar for days on end, will we be able to walk our dogs? Will the horses get sick? Do the bush kindies need to be cancelled?

Our community strives to adapt and innovate, preparing for future extreme
35 weather events, building local knowledge and community connection. Well, we also need to build trust, but trust in the New South Wales Department of Planning has been broken with this approval on a poorly chosen site. Where is the satisfactory buffer zone? What legislative buffers provide reassurance that this is
40 not just a greenwashing project, but is in fact viable?

Is our community being thrown under a bus for some votes? Like other rural areas,
45 we have a workforce shortage of professionals. Doctors, nurses, lawyers, vets. We don't have magnificent coastline and surf beaches to attract these professionals to our area. What we have to offer is beautiful bushland and rural living. And now, a plastics factory is coming.

The Highlands has a large visitor economy, and this includes being a wellness

destination, offering opportunities for destressing, clean air, and nature bathing. How will this be impacted?

5 In my work as a psychologist, I deal with the impacts of traumatic events on people's lives. People are now aware of the critical importance of preserving ecosystems, biodiversity, water, air, the bees. People feel anxious, fearful and depressed about their uncertain and insecure futures. These feelings become heightened when people witness denial of likely impacts and environmental damage. And when the proposals and assessments are not rigorous and genuinely
10 inviting of community engagement, such approvals can be experienced as traumatic and lead to people experiencing mental illness.

Mental health also impacts our systems and communities. A deterioration in community wellbeing damages the resilience of social infrastructure and
15 contributes to loss of identity. The physical and mental health impacts on children, growing up with toxins from a plastics factory contaminating their environment, with their parents in a chronic state of stress from worry.

This does not secure the future of the Southern Highlands. Rural communities
20 need to work together, and connection is a coping strategy. However, the relationship with Plasrefine was ruptured when the neighbourhood received unaddressed envelopes on Christmas Eve, and this relationship has only deteriorated. The recent approval has led to anger, as you have seen. And beneath this secondary emotion, sits primary emotions of hurt, sadness and despair.

25 Ecological grief, the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to environmental change, has become a clinical presentation. The term "solastalgia" is now used to express this lived experience of negative environmental change. A
30 new plastics factory so close to amenities and neighbourhoods will amplify the experience of ecological grief and solastalgia in our community.

Thank you for considering this is not the right site.

35 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Rebecca. Thank you. Our next speaker is Shantelle Harkness. Welcome, Shantelle.

MS SHANTELE HARKNESS: Hi. Thank you for letting me talk today. Look,
40 it is with great disappointment that I have yet again had to express my outrage and disbelief that Plasrefine is still going ahead with their proposal to build a monstrous plastic recycling factory only a few hundred metres from our property.

I live with my husband and four children. We are an outdoors family living a very
45 healthy life on our 11 acres, which we have worked extremely hard to get. My husband and son milk our house cows of a morning so we can have fresh milk to drink. We raise our own beef, have chickens for eggs, our vegie garden, and a beautiful orchard full of trees. We also have our rainwater in our tanks to drink, which is caught from the roof of our houses and sheds.

One can only imagine our outrage when we have seen the Plasrefine proposal had been given the greenlight. It begs belief. It's just not the right site.

5 The sheer disregard for the residents in the Wingecarribee, not only by Plasrefine and GHD, but also the Federal Government, is astounding. And this facility will impact the whole of the Southern Highlands, Goulburn and Sydney residents, not just Moss Vale. And the impact of this facility will last for generations to come.

10 If you care about our future and the future generations and the healthy lifestyle that they deserve to live, you should see that this is not the right site for such a heavy industrial facility. To think our beautiful property is going to be severely polluted by the microplastics every single day, not just when the prevailing westerly winds are strong, but every day of our lives. It is extremely distressing.

15 This poison cannot be seen by the naked eye and will be settling on our property everywhere. From the grass our animals eat to the food that we will be growing and eating, and the water we will be drinking, as well as our fresh cows' milk. I just cannot fathom why anyone would want to ruin and pollute such a beautiful environment. It's very disappointing and just gut-wrenching.

20 Put yourself in our shoes. Would you want this to happen to you and your family, your community? I don't think so. It has been stated many times before that Plasrefine have not ever had any experience with plastic recycling in Australia. And yet here it is, just a mere few hundred metres from residents. Surely, if our governing body are prepared to visit the site, they will see that this is not the right site for such a large-scale heavy industrial complex.

30 There is no way at all our community and properties and animals are going to be safe, especially when a fire breaks out. The toxins that we will be exposed to is going to be catastrophic. And how long is it going to take to get under control? Especially when we have very minimal fire-fighting units in our shire. It would take at least 45 minutes for backup to arrive, and only if they are available and not fighting fires elsewhere. And the clean up and toxic air the community will be breathing in will last for days and days.

40 It is not the right site, so close to our residents. Plasrefine is not at all suitable for this site due to the close proximity to the Wingecarribee River, where their microplastics will pollute this precious drinking water that goes to Sydney and Goulburn for the residents to drink. And I am sure the residents in these two areas have no idea how their lives are going to be unfavourably impacted.

45 Not only will it impact the drinking water, but what about all the native animals who drink and live in the water at the river? It is not at all the right site. And who would want to be responsible for ruining a whole ecosystem that has been there for hundreds of years?

In conclusion, I ask you, the panel, to put yourself in our shoes. How would you

feel about Plasrefine being so close to your family and your property that you have worked so hard to make your forever home, only to be forced to sell to give your family a chance to remain healthy? Because that is what we will be forced to do, if this terrible polluting factory is given your approval.

5

Please don't just approve Plasrefine's application because it ticks a few boxes. Please consider the residents that have lived here for decades, and the negative impact Plasrefine are going to have on our lives and on our future generations.

10

Our future is in your hands. Please make the right decision for our community and say no to Plasrefine. It is not the right site. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Shantelle. Okay, our next speaker is Greg Hickling.

15

MR GREG HICKLING: Thank you, Mr Chairman and thank you for the opportunity to present today. I believe Jason is going to bring up a couple of slides that I intend to talk through, sharing the screen. I don't see those come up yet – oh, here we go. Thank you.

20

I was asked to contribute my experience and knowledge as a fire fighter to the review of the Plasrefine application and DPHI Assessment Report. Let me clarify firstly, that while I am a senior operational officer within the New South Wales Rural Fire Service with over 10 years' experience as a volunteer fire fighter, I appear today in a personal capacity and do not represent the RFS in any official manner.

25

There seems to me to be several shortcomings in both the application and the DPHI Assessment Report. Next slide please, Jason. The first of these is that the piece of land on which the proposed facility is to be located is designated "Bushfire Prone Land". The New South Wales planning portal shows a high risk fire portion of vegetation actually on the lot in question.

30

On the next slide we see the RFS also has a search facility, if you can bring the next slide up please, Jason. Type in the – no, the one above – type in the address and you can see the alert pops up here. This is in fact in direct contradiction to the advice provided by the RFS in its letter to DPHI in October 2020.

35

New South Wales Planning circulars both current and the pending draft update contain detailed advice and requirements for planning in bush fire areas. Although State Significant Developments are not required to, both circulars suggest that the requirement should be considered, and advice sought from the RFS Commissioner in the planning phase. Neither of these things seem to have happened.

40

In the slide that you see there, if engaged, you can see there's a long list of concepts and guidance that the RFS would provide Plasrefine and DPHI if requested. Some of the key concepts to consider include adequate asset protection zones, emergency access and first responder safety, and emergency management arrangements are what we in the service call "detailed pre-incident planning".

45

5 Nest slide please. I note at this point that the application contains only three dot-point references to the entire matter of fire and risk management. And the DPHI assessment contains no reference at all to bushfire risk, and in fact suggests fire risk, full stop, is a relatively minor assessment issue.

10 The next slide please, I think you're one behind. I have a different view – that's the slide. Quick desktop research shows that fires in recycling plants are increasing number and there's a wealth of scientific literature as to why this might be the case. Importantly noting the impact of unwanted lithium batteries appearing in recycling waste. Plasrefine themselves state that they will produce 20,000 tonnes of waste a year, and if they say that it could include wood and stones, there's every chance that that sort of volume could include lithium batteries as well, and this is certainly consistent with the global scientific research.

15 Think about that for a second. The potential fire load of that plastic, up to 20 gigajoules per square metre, which equals around about 450 domestic fire places, and here we're talking about some 30,000 square metres of plastic.

20 Next slide please. The DPHI assessment makes reference to three fire trucks, and I believe this to be a reference to the three local Fire and Rescue New South Wales breathing apparatus or CABA appliances. The RFS also has three CABA brigades in the district, so there is actually a total of six, contrary to the application.

25 However, look at comparable incidents on the next slide that I've got up there, Jason. In the table above, all of these fires in plastic recycling facilities required many, many more resources than six appliances. That would be far from adequate. And the highlighted example in Richmond, Indiana is the most comparable size to the Plasrefine proposed site.

30 In the slide you see before you, this is what that fire looked like. What's most important here are the implications. A fire like this would be far beyond the capability and capacity of local resources, and the requisite specialist resources are at least one hour away. The impacts would be significant and long lasting.

35 My point here is that the likelihood of a major fire event, the impacts of this, and dealing with the aftermath should form core components of a detailed risk analysis and disaster management plan.

40 Next slide please. If that wasn't enough, we have to guess at what hazardous chemicals may be on site. They have not been disclosed, but these are those that I have found through my own research into plastic recycling. Short to say they will add to the danger and also require specialist resources and major incident Hazchem teams to be called in all the way from Wollongong, Campbelltown or further.

45 Last slide please. I haven't set out to provide advice, draw conclusions, or form recommendations from my research presented here. There are, however, important

questions that I raise on matters which I see a lack of adequate consideration, and in some cases, no consideration at all.

5 With all due respect to the parties, I put it to the Committee that there is much more work required to fully understand the likelihood of fire, the magnitude of a major catastrophe, and best practice asset disaster planning. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much, Greg. We – you have a question?

10 **MS SYKES:** Yes, I just – the slide on the bushfire. Greg, I just had a question, thanks very much for your submission and the slides. Could we perhaps bring the slide deck back up, because it just moved through fairly quickly, just the slide with the bushfire zone, and if you could just reiterate your points around that slide.

15 **MR HICKLING:** Certainly. My starting point was there was a letter submitted by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service to DPHI dated October 2020 that stated, and I quote, “We have nothing to comment here. The proposed site is not within a designated Bushfire Prone Zone.” That is factually incorrect, and we can source that and cross check that two ways.

20 One via the New South Wales Department of Planning portal which is the slide you see here. And more specifically, that red zone, that little house-shaped zone you see, is a high fire risk piece of vegetation. And that actually sits on the lot in question. And I cross checked that against the New South Wales own sort of
25 designated Bushfire Prone site. Which you can quickly type in the address, 74 to 76 Beaconsfield Road, and it comes up with a warning, “You are in a designated Bushfire Prone Zone.”

30 **MS SYKES:** Thanks very much, Greg.

MR MILLS: Thank you. No other questions? Okay, thank you. I appreciate that, Greg. Our next speakers are the Shire Council, who I don’t believe are quite ready. I might give them – we need to give them five minutes. So, we’ll just a
35 five-minute break.

SHORT BREAK

40 **MS STANNARD:** ... process, however, Council remains strongly of the opinion that the subject land is most inappropriate for the proposal, and that several aspects of the proposal itself require further investigation prior to any determination for its progression.

45 Council remains deeply concerned that so many matters considered fundamental to the overall viability of the project have been relegated to conditions of consent, rather than being integral to the assessment process itself. The listing of an operational traffic management as a condition of consent is especially concerning, given one of its key intents is network efficiency. The proposed site could hardly be more demanding on both the existing and future road network.

5 The proposal nominates 100 truck movements per day over an 11-hour operational timeframe. That is one truck every 6.6 minutes entering or leaving the site. But of course they are not just entering or leaving the site, they are also traversing the SHIP in both directions, with all the consequent impacts on existing and future traffic movements.

10 Depending on where the trucks are coming from, the north or south, it is between 7.5 and 9.0 kilometres from the Hume Motorway to the site, involving three level crossings of an active train line. To make that trip in 6.6 minutes would require an average speed of between 68 and 82 kilometres per hour. Clearly, that is not possible. The reality therefore would be a constant stream of trucks in both directions throughout that 11-hour timeframe.

15 Exacerbating these demands on the road network are the 280 worker vehicle movements per day, resulting in a peak of 93 vehicles across the three shift changeovers, at 7 a.m., 3 p.m. and 11 p.m. There are no route restrictions on these vehicles, so it is expected that both Braddon and Beaconsfield roads, which are currently unsuited to such large increases in traffic volume, would also be affected.

20 And it can't be assumed that all workers will be local, with many also making their way across to the Hume Motorway as they travel between their homes and the site. Further compounding traffic demands on these roads.

25 The inability to manage this volume of traffic and vehicle movements with any certainty would effectively monopolise the existing road system for significant repercussions for both existing and future businesses within the SHIP. And these repercussions challenge the fundamental viability of the business itself to achieve functional service objectives, emphasising why Council believes that a realistic and comprehensive operational management traffic plan needs to be prepared and assessed before any determination to proceed.

30 Nor does council consider that the many environmental matters can be relegated to post determination conditions of consent. Conclusions from state agencies that the environmental impacts of discharges can be managed or are acceptable or not significant, offer little confidence and place the burden of compliance fully on Council.

35 Research into microplastic impacts is still evolving, and much remains unknown about their long-term impacts. What is known is that each year, 400 grams of microplastics will be discharged into the Moss Vale Sewerage Treatment Plant, which has no specific process to remove them; thereby releasing microplastics directly into the environment, including the Sydney drinking water catchment.

40 Grouping microplastics in with total suspended solids does not provide any measure of their specific potential impact on the catchment, and therefore there can be no true measure of neutral or beneficial effect. A further shortcoming is a

lack of clear data on the cumulative impact of airborne microplastics, where they will settle and their impacts on human health, agricultural, biodiversity and waterways.

5 Council also remains concerned that the views of the community have not been fairly represented in the Assessment Report, although Council does appreciate the extent to which the Commission has facilitated community engagement on this occasion. The Department’s report acknowledges considerable and ongoing public concern with the social impacts of the development. But attributes this concern, on
10 more than one occasion, to community distress with the changing character of the area and its effect on their sense of place and surroundings.

This comment would appear to be inconsistent with page 22 of the Assessment Report, which notes that of the 329 submissions to the Department’s exhibition of
15 the draft proposal, 71% referenced traffic concerns, with numerous submissions referencing air quality, water quality and noise. Almost one-third specifically mentioned the unsuitability of the site. These are not just concerns about the changing character of the area. These are legitimate and relevant concerns about the potential adverse impacts of a development for a purpose not suited to its
20 location.

The implied reference to these concerns being simply “a NIMBY response” is not fair or accurate. The independent assessment by Professor Roberta Ryan acknowledges that social impacts would remain, despite proposed mitigation
25 measures by the applicant. And recommends the applicant prepare a social impact management plan. Council recommends that such a plan be independently prepared, to ensure it honestly reflects community concerns.

Professor Ryan also recommends that a community consultative committee be
30 established. But until the community believes that its concerns are being accurately portrayed and acknowledged, it is doubtful any useful dialogue would result.

It’s all this lack of detail that concerns both Council and the community. And the
35 fact that so much detail won’t be revealed until the numerous identified management plans have been prepared and assessed. If these remain as conditions of consent, their value to the decision-making process is lost. It is the Council and the community that will be left to manage the outcomes from any decision to proceed. Those outcomes include significant impacts on the ongoing viability of
40 the SHIP to deliver the type of positive and appropriate enterprise hub articulated in the state-funded Master Plan and Governance Strategy.

Yes, we need a circular economy, and recycling of plastics is central to its success. Perhaps a more proactive and strategic approach to this at the state level would be
45 to identify potential localities or sites across the state where such recycling facilities could best be placed to optimise access, minimise community impact, and more equitably share the environmental burden.

If such an analysis were undertaken, it is highly doubtful that the proposed Plasrefine site would be on that list. I'll now hand over to Mayor Owen.

5 **MAYOR JESSE FITZPATRICK:** I would like to thank you again for taking the time to hear our community. It's been an intense and emotional three days, and I am sure you have felt the weight of that. But for us here in the Wingecarribee, it hasn't been three days; it's been three long years.

10 Council has rejected or worked towards rejecting this proposal over nine times. There have been 1,200 public submissions (and growing) against this proposal. You have had more than a thousand people turn up in person to support this objection. You have had the 120 speakers attend, and they have almost entirely come to object.

15 This proposal is not supported by the nine new councillors elected by this community and sworn in only weeks ago. This proposal is not supported by our two State Members. This proposal is not supported by our Federal Member.

20 In my opening speech, I stated that I hope you would hear us loud and clear, and I hope that you will do the right thing by us. So I will ask one more, will you do the right thing by the residents of the Wingecarribee? Thank you, guys.

25 **MR MILLS:** Thank you, Mayor. Thank you both. We now have the applicants available to us to answer some questions. Are they all available? Hello, can you hear us?

MS SOFIE MASON-JONES: We can, thank you.

30 **MR MILLS:** Okay. So, I understand we have Sofie Mason-Jones.

MS MASON-JONES: Yes.

35 **MR MILLS:** Romina Cavallo and David Gamble. All there, thank you. I'd like to start out by asking you a question around, I guess, the concerns that we've heard in relation to air quality in particular. And to get a better understanding of the operational aspects of the proposed recycling facility.

40 In particular, I wanted to unpack a little bit of detail, and although we've set aside some time, this is our time as the panel, so I can give ourselves a little bit more latitude to ask long questions.

45 So, if you can just explain to us how long it takes for roller doors to open, a truck to go in, and then close each time? I just want to get an understanding of how long the area is exposed for.

MR DAVID GAMBLE: Commissioner, we have estimated that it will be about two to three minutes per truck movement. So, that's a truck reversing in and then later on, the truck leaving the building. We've look – we kind of estimate roughly

about 5 hours maximum per day.

MR MILLS: So in total, that's 5 hours.

5 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes.

MS MILLIGAN: So, two to three minutes, the roller doors then close? Two to three minutes for the truck to exit, is that what you're saying?

10 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes, that's correct.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay, thank you.

15 **MR MILLS:** Oh, okay. So, when you say per truck movement, you mean each entry and exit is a separate truck movement?

MR GAMBLE: That's right. And on that basis, over a whole day, we estimate roughly 5 hours.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** That the doors will be open?

MR MILLS: So, 5 hours the doors are open for?

25 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes.

MR MILLS: And there is – sorry, I guess a related question is how much of the production line itself is opened or enclosed? And if you had any pictures that might help in this regard, you could submit those separately as well. Could you just explain in terms of the actual production line itself, how much is open, how much is closed?

30 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes, Commissioner. Would it be okay if I first explain about the roller doors. I think there has been some concern about plastics flying outside the building when the roller doors are open.

35 **MR MILLS:** Sure.

MR GAMBLE: So, the whole building, if we were able to go slide number 4, what we've shown there is a cross section of the building.

40 **MR MILLS:** Thank you.

45 **MR GAMBLE:** So, basically, it shows the roller door there. There would be a negative air pressure situation set up with roof ventilators drawing air into the building. And that would mean that air comes in through the roller door rather than going out. So, when the roller door is open, there's no possibility of microplastics or other plastic pieces going outside. Everything will be drawn inside.

Also, Commissioner, is it possible that we could go to slide number 10?

5 **MR MILLS:** Before you do, you said “no possibility”. That’s a fairly definitive kind of statement. Does that – is that impacted by wind movements?

10 **MR GAMBLE:** No. I mean, the prevailing wind direction that’s been noted is from the west, so the wind will actually be blowing into the building rather than outside in the westerly direction. So, that’s our understanding. But the roller doors are partly shielded by the Wastewater Treatment Plant in any case.

We don’t believe there’s any possibility of having material escaping the building there. And if we are, if we could go to slide number 10.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Can I just ask one question.

MR MILLS: Sorry, before you go onto that, just another question.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Yes. So, I’m just thinking about the negative air pressure, about wind coming in through the roller door. Is there much wind air movement – can I use the word ‘turbulence’ inside the building? Say, if there was a strong westerly wind, is there much air movement?

25 **MR GAMBLE:** No, the entire building will be like fully enclosed, so it’s like if you open a roller door, you open a door and there’s no other windows open, air can’t flow through. It basically creates like a natural barrier. So, what I wanted to point out was the layout of the building as well, if I could just show you slide number 10.

30 **MR MILLS:** Mm-hmm.

35 **MR GAMBLE:** Which hasn’t come up yet. But basically slide number 10 shows that all the materials stored along the western edge of the building. And there’s – basically, it’s not in direct line with the wind coming in or any air coming in. So, again, any air coming into the door would not affect any plastics. It would not cause the plastics to blow outside.

40 **MR MILLS:** Okay. Although in part, that is related to the question I was starting to ask, which is in relation to the production line. How much of that is open and how much is enclosed?

45 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes, so there will be a process for unbaling of the material that would most likely be an open process. But it will be contained on the sides, but there’ll be an – you’ll be able to see above what’s going on. There’s a necessity to be able to see what’s going on in a number of the production processes, to ensure there’s nothing going wrong. And particularly when the material is being unbaled, it will have to be visual. However, there is no real possibility of plastics particles at that point. We’re talking about whole plastic items.

5 And then the next process is a shredding-type process – sorry, the next process is the sorting process. So it'll go through like an optical sorting system and also near infrared. And that will sort into the types of plastics, the plastics will then ... So, that will be basically a conveyor line and that will be partly open, apart from when it's going through the sorting equipment.

10 And then it goes off into different directions and it gets shredded. And the shredding process will be fully enclosed. That's the process where there is a possibility of generating microplastics, so that'll be fully enclosed and that will have its own air extraction system. So you won't – any sort of particles won't be emitted into the surrounding environment of the building, you know, for OH&S reasons as much as anything else.

15 So then following that, there will be a washing process. So, that'll be pretty much fully enclosed. And then after that, the plastics will be dried and then stored as either flakes or moved onto another process where it would be turned into pellets using like a heat-forming process. And then some material will be stored as pellets or sold as pellets; the other material will be turned into product, and probably not immediately, you know, it will be stored until there's the right sort of enough material to create the product etc. or the right mix.

25 So, I guess most of the processes are enclosed, apart from any locations where it's necessary to have a visual assessment of what's going on in the equipment.

30 **MR MILLS:** Okay. Can I just take you back to the drawing, the washing you indicated was fully enclosed. Was drying of the flakes and pellets?

MR GAMBLE: Yes, the drying will need to be fully enclosed as well.

MR MILLS: Fully enclosed as well. Okay. And then storage is open, is it?

35 **MR GAMBLE:** No, it will be stored in probably large bags, and that's what is commonly used overseas, Bulka bags. Because the material is quite fine at that point. So that would be stored within the building, you know, it would need leave the building. Nothing is stored outside either, raw material or finished product.

MR MILLS: Okay. Thank you.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** I had two questions, please. The first one's about microplastics. Can I just ask, when the material comes in and it's baled, and you said there would be no risk of microplastics at that point. Would none of that plastic be degraded, broken, shredded, with no risk of microplastic into the surroundings?

45 **MR GAMBLE:** Well, I guess what's expected is the material will come from a material recovery facility where it's already been pre-sorted to remove the paper and the metals etc. So, it should be coming in fresh and, you know, it's been in the material recovery facility probably only for a week or two. So, not expecting any

degraded plastics to be received by the facility.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay.

5 **MR MILLS:** Sorry, can I ask a follow-up question to that? Just in terms of baling, does baling include crushing in order to bale? Because normally, I think of most baling in other kinds of products, that it's put through some kind of compression or ...

10 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes. In the MRF they would – yes, a baling machine basically compresses into a cube and then quite often the bales are wrapped in plastic to facilitate transfer and avoid any material getting out, sort of thing. So, it just depends on the agreement with the supplier. But it's expected that raw material will arrive baled.

15 **MR MILLS:** Sure. But just in terms of Commissioner Milligan's question, it does strike me that the baling process itself would have crushed material, so therefore there's the risk of microplastics already in the baled material itself.

20 **MR GAMBLE:** I say, Commissioner, that's a possibility, but it's unlikely to be a significant amount. And the material – the trucks will arrive and they'll be unloaded when the roller doors are closed. So, if there is any sort of plastic pieces that come out of the bales, then they will be collected by the housekeeping staff. The floors will need to be kept clean using, you know, vacuums and drive-around
25 type cleaners. So, it's really important to maintain good housekeeping in these plants.

MR MILLS: Okay.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** I had a second question.

MR MILLS: Thank you.

35 **MS MILLIGAN:** So, my second question please, is also about the material coming in but it relates to a number of submissions we've heard from people, as being a personal concern about lithium batteries as the source of fires. And we've heard a couple of people reference research or other instances where lithium batteries found their way into the plastics and were the source of fires.

40 So, can I just ask you in relation to the sorting, do you have anything to say about the concern that lithium batteries might be in the material that comes into the facility?

45 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes. All the material coming into the facility will need to be inspected for the presence of lithium batteries. But of course, there will need to be contracts with suppliers to ensure that there are no lithium batteries before they arrive. That's the only way of guaranteeing that there will be no lithium batteries at the facility.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** This is a broader industry question then. Is that general practice in the industry? Because people have spoken to us about examples in other facilities where lithium batteries have found their way in. So, I suppose I'm asking if the contracts or the operating procedures you're anticipating in this proposal might be different?

10 **MR GAMBLE:** I think that what this proposal is like a processing of material that's already been through the kerbside recycling system. So, the main risk of lithium batteries is when people put them into their yellow-top bin, so or ... And then at the material recovery facility, they will have the risk of the lithium batteries. They'll be removed at that stage and the feedstock that comes to this facility will already have that safety action taken at the material recovery facility.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you.

MR MILLS: Okay.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Mm-hmm.

25 **MS SYKES:** Thanks, David. I had a couple of questions as well, probably on the topic of sort of the air quality, if we sort of loop back to that one. There has been a number of submissions raised over the, throughout the meeting on prevailing westerly winds and the concern related to the modelling of these winds and related to air quality impacts.

30 Could you perhaps explain to us how the existence of the prevailing westerly winds has been modelled, and how they have been taken into account in terms of the air quality monitoring – in particular with the movement of airborne microplastics or emissions, or in relation to, say, a catastrophic event such as fire.

35 **MR GAMBLE:** Okay, thank you. When you do an air quality assessment for an EIS, you use sophisticated air modelling software, you know, AUSPLUME or something similar. And what that takes into account is the meteorology of the entire area where you're looking at. So you basically use – and I'm not an air quality specialist – but our team uses at least a year's worth of data to substantiate the air quality assessment. So it takes into account the prevailing winds etc., different times of the year, and then it basically works out what the potential, you might say deposition rate is on any location, any distance away.

40 So, what's normally done is you look at the nearest receivers, as they're called, by any residential properties that are near to the facility. The Garvan Institute in this case is the nearest commercial facility. And then the assessment showed that the levels of particulates, you know, fine particulates, were way below the criteria for residential facilities and also for the Garvan facility. Other than in a situation where the background levels were really high, and this will be when there's a bushfire or, you know, a smoke in the air because of back burning etc. or a dust storm. These events occur only infrequently, probably once or twice every two or

three years. So, but in most, if not all cases, the impacts are very, very low.

5 And there a number of other background sources of things like microplastics, like car tyres, for example. There are nearby industrial facilities that are emitting stuck from stacks, so there's a whole lot of other potential background sources of this material as well. That's why we see microplastics already present in the environment. It's not because of this facility, it hasn't been built yet, it's because other things that we do in the modern age.

10 And there was a question about fire though, Commissioner. Could you please give me a bit more clarification on that one?

MR GAMBLE: Well, in relation to fire ...

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** I think he's asking for clarification of your question.

MS SYKES: So, it was the modelling of the prevailing westerly winds and in particular, in terms of the risk assessment around sort of catastrophic events such as a fire.

20 **MR MILLS:** At the site.

MS SYKES: At the site.

25 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes, okay. So, I mean, one thing I wanted to firstly correct is that the site is not in a bushfire zone. That's been said in the previous presentation and it's simply not correct.

30 The facility has been designed in concert with New South Wales Fire and Rescue Guidelines. If we could go to slide 10, please. I just want to quickly talk through that one. So, the guidelines require facilities to be designed to minimise the potential for fires to – first of all, fires to start, and then and fires to spread. So, the material is stored in concrete pens, it's basically separated so there's only a certain amount of material in one location. And if there was a small fire, there would be
35 little likelihood of it spreading to the next location.

40 So, the facility also, has shown on slide 11, it's going to have a sprinkler system. So, being a large building and being industrial, it's required to have sprinkler systems. It's going to have fire hydrants within and outside the building. There's a ring road for fire vehicle access. And the entrance will meet fire-fighting requirements.

45 So, the New South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has signed off on the proposal, actually I think it was in 2023. And they were asked to provide further comment recently and they declined. So, we think the risk of fire is relatively low.

MS SYKES: Okay. Thank you.

MR MILLS: Okay.

MS SYKES: Do we have – oh sorry, going onto ...

5 **MR MILLS:** I have a few questions around water, in particular stormwater – I
don't think I'm alone amongst the commissioners on that. And I might just, in
fact, just a continuation of the point you've just made in terms of a fire sprinkler
system operating. Would the water and/or any chemicals that are included in that
10 fire-fighting equipment, would they be contained on site, and how would that be
done?

MR GAMBLE: Yes, no, that's definitely a requirement and it's already been
stated in the EIS that any fire water needs to be contained within the building. So
there will be tanks underneath the floor of the building where all this water will be
15 collected, and then it can be extracted and treated appropriately.

MR MILLS: Thank you. Do you want to ...

MS SYKES: So, thanks David. If we have time, I just wanted to sort of talk about
20 then the water. There have been submissions that have raised concern relating to
water discharge. Could you explain a little bit more around the design that has
included allowance for water discharge off site, and has consideration been given
or is it practically feasible to design the site as a nil zero site?

25 **MR GAMBLE:** Certainly. Would it be possible to go to slide number 3 please?
Just briefly. What we've drawn on slide number 3 is a three-dimensional
representation of how the water management would occur on the site. So, all roof
water would be collected for use within the – sorry, not all roof water. Roof water
would be collected for use within the process to reduce the demand on water from
30 the surrounding water main etc.

Any wastewater would be discharged to a Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is
on the site, and then it will be continuously recirculated after being cleaned. So,
it's not expected that there would be too many occasions when water would need
35 to be discharged to the sewer. But should this be necessary, the water would be
treated – it will be treated, the water will be discharged, we would have the
minimum amount of microplastics or other solids in it, and it would fully meet the
Council's trade waste limits, which is 300, and it's going to be only at
40 40 milligrams per litre. There would be no discharges from the process plant itself.
There will be no discharges to the waterways on the site.

The only discharges to the waterways on site would be through bioretention
basins. And this will be stormwater from the roads and the covered areas and
paved areas on the site. That will go through a bioretention basin which is
45 basically like a sand filter with reeds and stuff as well to reduce any biological
content. And that would meet the NorBE requirements, which is Neutral or
Beneficial Impact, so the water would actually be improved in quality from what
is shed from the road by at least 10%.

So, there is really little pathway for any microplastics to enter the water environment.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** Can I ask a question?

MR MILLS: Yes.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** Can I just ask another question about stormwater. So, thank you for your explanation. I'm interested in the impact on stormwater. You've just given us an answer that hinted at the fact that microplastics on the roadways etc. would be dealt with in a certain way. But I'm wondering about stormwater in a catastrophic event.

15 So, say there's an equipment failure or there is a major flood. So, can you just talk to us about the possibility of stormwater then containing microplastics, and those ending up in the waterways, not in discharged water, but through stormwater?

20 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes. Commissioner, we haven't got a three-dimensional diagram of the site, but basically the platform on which the buildings are located is located well above ground level. So, it's a sloping site as you probably know when you went to see the site, and the buildings, there's two levels, there's a level near Braddon Road and then it goes down by another 2 metres, I think, to the next level.

25 But basically, it's a platform and it is way above the surrounding side, you know, the riparian areas. So, if there was any sort of flooding in the riparian areas, it would not affect the building itself.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** But it may get to the land around the building. So, I'm thinking if there were to be a flood event, I understand what you're saying about the microplastics that might be generated or might occur within the building. But I'm just wondering if you can talk to us a little bit about microplastics and the possibility of them being outside the building, on the roof, around the building,
35 and what would the implications be of a catastrophic event like major flood.

40 **MR GAMBLE:** Well, I suppose the first thing, I guess, there's no – it's not zero discharge in terms of particulates. It's meeting the EPA requirements. It's a very low level. And added to that is the background level from other sources. So, all areas around the site would experience some form of particulates settling on it. So, certainly during a normal rainfall event, these would potentially enter the bioretention basin etc. and they would potentially be collected in that basin.

45 But in a catastrophic event, obviously there would be a lot bigger waterflow through the area, and it could certainly carry some particulates with it. But in the whole scheme of things in that event, the volumes of water will be so huge that there will be an immense dilution effect, which would occur, so, in the, like a catastrophic flood event.

As I said before, I don't expect the site – the facility itself would not be affected by a flood, but the surrounding area might have a greater than normal flow through those two watercourses.

5

MR MILLS: But presumably – if I might add – presumably in the case of a flood, there would be considerable stormwater flowing across, much higher levels/volumes of stormwater flowing across the site as well.

10

MR GAMBLE: Yes, that's correct. And also, Commissioner, other sites, there are other sites in the surrounding area which have uncovered stockpiles of material etc. They would all be feeding into the same flood waters. It's going to be a catastrophic situation where there'd be – the contribution of this site will be minuscule compared to the contribution of other sources that might be flooded at the same time.

15

MR MILLS: Yes, although we're not considering the other sites; we're considering this one.

20

Did you have any further questions? Did you want to talk about the heights of the building?

25

MS SYKES: Yes. I just had one further question, David, related to, I guess, the building design. We did hear a submission today that recognised that modifications have been made to the height of the building which in turn the height of the emission stacks. I think on day one we heard that the estimated height of the emission stacks is approximately 2 metres above the height of the building.

30

Could you explain why the building design was higher in the first place? And are there any implications by reducing the building height or indeed the overall height or datum of the emission stacks, whether that creates any implication on the air quality movements related from the site, or any other assessments that have been carried out under the alternate design scenario?

35

MR GAMBLE: Well, certainly, Commissioner. So, the original proposed site of the buildings in the EIS was 15 to 18 metres. And that was based on an initial assessment of equipment heights. The LEP doesn't contain the height development standard for the site. So, the proposed heights were within the 20 metre maximum controller in the MVEC DCP.

40

45

So, where possible, the project sought to have regard to the guidelines in the MVEC DCP. And that's why it was kept below 20 metres. So, following public exhibition and consultation, there were comments made about whether it's possible to reduce the height of the buildings. So, alternative equipment was selected that would enable the reduction in height. And the reduction in height does not compromise the efficiency of the stacks, because the stacks are located on the lower parts, it's a sloping roof, so it would just be a minimum of 2 metres

between the roof and the top of the stack. It could well be more than that.

MS SYKES: Thank you. That's helpful.

5 **MR MILLS:** And the selection of that alternative equipment isn't of a lesser quality in terms of containment?

10 **MR GAMBLE:** No. I mean, it's like within the building itself, the equipment I'm talking about is all the sorting equipment. So, as you can imagine, some of this equipment is quite tall. And the proponent has sourced alternative equipment which is slightly shorter, that would enable the building to reduce in height.

MR MILLS: Thank you.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** One last question, I think, just a clarification. We heard, over the three days there were a number of questions and comments about the stacks. So, can I just clarify what you just said. You said the stack needs to be a minimum of 2 metres above the roofline, but it could be higher. Do you know how high the stacks will be? Or when will that be decided?

20 **MR GAMBLE:** Well, the maximum height of the stacks has already been determined as 15.5 metres from the ground level, or from the base level of the building. So, it would just be determined by where in the building they were located as to what the height of the roof is at that point, because it being a sloping roof etc. But there would always – it would be positioned so there would be a
25 minimum of 2 metres to enable good dispersion.

MS MILLIGAN: I see, I understand. Thank you.

30 **MR MILLS:** From the top of the equipment to the roof, is that ...?

MS SYKES: The base of the building to the ...

35 **MR GAMBLE:** Yes, base of the building, yes. So, it's shown on slide number, I think it's the cross section of the site I showed before, which is number 4. So, 4 has like a representation of that.

MR MILLS: Mm-hmm.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay.

MR MILLS: Okay.

45 **MR GAMBLE:** I mean, I just wanted to point out again that all the process equipment will have air filtration systems. So, the amount of potential microplastics is potentially or obviously very low.

MR MILLS: Thank you. No other questions?

MS SYKES: No.

MS MILLIGAN: No, all good.

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MR MILLS: No? Thank you very much to you and the team for your time and for the answers you've given. Thank you.

MR GAMBLE: Yes, thank you, commissioners, I appreciate your time.

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MR MILLS: We now turn to Departmental representatives Chris Ritchie and Sheelagh Laguna, who have been patiently waiting, I understand. Thank you for your patience. Are you online? Hello? Chris and Sheelagh, ah, you are there. Thank you.

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MR CHRIS RITCHIE: Yes.

MS SHEELAGH LAGUNA: Yes.

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MR MILLS: Thank you very much. And thank you for your patience as we questioned the applicant. We just had a few questions for you if you wouldn't mind considering these, and of course if you don't have immediate answers, please do feel free to take them on notice and come back to us.

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Can I just start out by asking if you might just elaborate for us on how it's considered the project's site suitability. In particular, the panel is interested to hear how the Department considered the potential for land use conflict, the increased traffic movements in the locality, fire events, as well as some microplastics entering the environment in an unexpected water or material-related event.

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MR RITCHIE: No problem. So, it's Chris Ritchie here. So, first of all thank you to the IPC for providing us with the opportunity to answer some questions. So, I'll answer the first one here.

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So, in terms of the project suitability and some of those points that you raised, land use conflict was obviously one of probably the key issues raised in submissions, and obviously we understand the concerns and issues raised in submissions and generally from the community. Now, the first thing the Department really does look at in terms of land use conflict, is consider that the zoning and permissibility of the proposal, noting that the site itself is located in an E4 General Industrial Zone, and the proposal would be permissible with consent.

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The other key issue in terms of this particular project is its location towards the eastern end of the industrial zone, which is roughly about 1,053 hectares. Now, that position itself does lend itself to certain particular issues that we need to consider in terms of land use conflict. And those things are broadly related to amenity impacts or visual, which is a big community issue, as well as traffic.

But equally, one of the things to point out is we're obviously aware of the Australian Bioresources facility which is located directly to the east as well. So, in terms of land use conflict, that itself then brings some additional issues also to consider, noting there's some sensitivities around how it operated.

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In terms of some of those issues, one of the first things to note is the facility itself will be enclosed. So, around air, noise and border, there are probably some key issues that being enclosed allow a better form of management of these types of issues in terms of impacts on a community. The assessment did consider those impacts in the context of government policy and guidelines.

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In terms of air emissions, for example, the assessment considered PM10, PM2.5, as well as VOCs or volatile organic compound emissions. As well as from an acoustic point of view, construction noise, operational noise, and traffic noise. And also from a water, noting is enclosed, does allow a better form of water management.

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In terms of the particular issues we looked at, design was obviously one of the key ones as well, making sure that there was a good design outcome to try and address some concerns around bulk and scale. To try and – I'm just getting some repeat. To manage some of those sort of interaction impacts, noting obviously where it's located. Now, the applicant did prepare some additional reporting and analysis around that, and did make some design changes.

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In terms of landscaping, for example, to try and again mitigate some of those impacts, there was additional work done to add additional landscaping to the site. But also additional mounding to try and add additional screening to minimise, I suppose, that land use conflict again. Noting that around 37% of the site will be landscape and noting where the receivers are particularly located to the south and to the east, there was additional focus to make sure that there was a better landscape outcome to minimise that land use impact. Noting that we also required additional planting of more mature plants to get more of a quicker landscape effect to mitigate that impact.

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Equally, there are recommendations included additional landscaping off site to again mitigate that impact. Some of that landscaping, for example, and mounding will be up to 4 metres to achieve some of that relief.

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In terms of other particular issues that we focused on and you mentioned issues around traffic impacts in locality or increase in traffic impacts. The facility itself – and noting this is probably one of the key issues that we focused on throughout the assessment, was we wanted to make sure we got a good traffic access outcome through this process.

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Now, again we noted through the community engagement that traffic access impact was a concern, and it did change a number of times. Where the amendment in particular, which came in towards the end of last year, landed was having an access that was more north-south towards Douglas Road. That way, moving the

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5 traffic movements and access away from that residential area. But at some stage, a lot of that access was coming through the east, and I know during the preparation to response to submissions, there was concerns around some of that access actually being near and along where some schools are located. So, the Department was very particular to request and direct that that be amended to come from a north-south direction.

10 In terms of traffic numbers, the proposal itself is going to generate a level of traffic, and as all developments do. In terms of the numbers it's going to generate, it's not considered to be a high number. There are facilities located nearby that have been approved which will generate more traffic than this particular proposal will. In total, it was around about a hundred per day of heavy vehicles, or around 15 10 movements in the peak hour. Other facilities are more than that, and upwards of 35 in the peak hour, for example, compared to the 10. So, from a traffic increase point of view, we're comfortable in terms of achieving a better access more to the north-south.

20 And in terms of the total number, it's not seen to be a significant amount, but noting what we did want to do is keep that movement, particularly the heavy vehicles, away from residential areas. And a lot of that will be emphasised through detailed traffic management plans and operational, what we call operational drive code of conducts, which is making it clear about expectations in terms of where that access is to be, and also how traffic numbers will be monitored to make sure that they are complying with that requirement.

25 In terms of fire events, and again that was another key issue particularly with the closest receivers. We did meet and talk to fire brigade a number of times, and also with the Australian Bioresearch facility who were particularly concerned with smoke, for example. Now, in terms of doing the assessment on fire, the key issue for the assessment was it had to address and follow the New South Wales Fire Safety Guidelines, in terms of how fire safety and waste management facilities is considered and managed.

30 And some of the key requirements of that guideline include, particularly for waste facilities, is stockpile size, stockpile locations, also how you establish your fire-fighting infrastructure, but equally making sure that that's accessible in times of a fire. Now, that includes the infrastructure wires, sprinkles, detections and warning – and that's another thing that we focused on, particularly with the research facility, is giving adequate warning and engagement as part of that fire preparation and in the event of a fire itself.

35 And some of the key requirements of that guideline include, particularly for waste facilities, is stockpile size, stockpile locations, also how you establish your fire-fighting infrastructure, but equally making sure that that's accessible in times of a fire. Now, that includes the infrastructure wires, sprinkles, detections and warning – and that's another thing that we focused on, particularly with the research facility, is giving adequate warning and engagement as part of that fire preparation and in the event of a fire itself.

40 Now, the whole notion of the guidelines is to ensure that waste facilities are designed and operated suit to manage fire risk. Equally, what the Department's recommended and it will be noted in the conditions, I think it's B55, B60, sorry, is around the need for a fire safety study. And the key requirements of that is that it has to be prepared and approved by the Department and fire brigade before they commence construction.

5 And some of the requirements include around ensuring that there's sufficient fire-fighting capacity within the local area. But equally, around in terms of a fire event, how any fire water will be managed in terms of when there's a fire event, how once a fire is put out, how is that water addressed. And there is actually a guideline that we'll refer to in the conditions around containment water retention and treatment systems, again to manage that fire impact.

10 The important thing to also mention is in terms of that fire safety study requirement, not only do the fire brigade have to approve that study, but also ourselves, and the Department does have in-house subject matter experts around hazards and risks, who review hazard-based projects across the state, not only for the Department but also external agencies, that are very experienced in dealing with the industrial types of facilities.

15 In terms of potential microplastics entering the environment through unexpected events. A couple of things to sort of outline here is, one, noting what I mentioned before is that the facility will be fully enclosed. So, in terms of flood waters or large storm events, the first thing to note is the facility will be enclosed. The facility is also located above the 1-in-100 plus freeboard. So, in the event of storms or overflow from dams, for example, then it should be located outside of where that water discharges.

25 Equally, a lot of waste facilities do have what we call fast-acting closing doors; those doors are required during any times of operation to mitigate some of those issues I mentioned before around air and noise and water management. But in the events that there are particular issues with the doors, for example, then it would be an override process to address that issue. Equally, the conditions which are spelled out in the report, including B44(b) around air and B57 subclause (b) around noise is the facility is not permitted to be operating unless those doors are kept closed, except obviously when materials are coming in and out.

35 And the idea of obviously the fast-acting doors is to mitigate any amenity issues. But equally to control the operation itself. Now, if there was an emergency and there was a shutdown, then there would have to be an override to basically manually shut those doors.

40 In terms of fire-fighting discharge in terms of microplastics, as I mentioned, there was a requirement in the fire safety study to address how fire water would be contained and then dealt with in terms of taking that off site or mitigate any particular impacts around that. Equally, there are air emission controls from a microplastics point of view generally, in terms of any processing area has like hoods to control the emissions, to collect particulates. And then being a nil discharge site, that any process water which is often used internally, won't be discharged off site, and there will be a process of a requirement for a discharge licence to collect any water that's not being used which might contain some material, that that will be dealt with and taken off site at the appropriate facility.

MR MILLS: Thank you. That's quite comprehensive. Thank you.

MS MILLIGAN: Had a question.

MR MILLS: Yes, please.

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MS MILLIGAN: Yes, just one question please, Chris. You talked about the importance of the facility only operating when the doors were closed, and we understand that, and you seemed to say that that's sort of ameliorated some of the issues that you were looking at.

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The information we've been given is the doors, just through normal operations, will be open for at least 5 hours a day. Do you have any response to that? Does that change anything you've said about the security of knowing that the processes are happening inside a closed building?

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MR RITCHIE: Yes, generally the way facilities like this, and waste facilities generally, you have what's called fast-acting doors. And that means as a truck arrives, the door comes up, the truck enters the facility, and the door closes again.

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In terms of the period of 5 hours that you mention, I might take that particular time and question on notice and I'll come back with a response, because that's – as I've said before, generally it's fast and closed and then while that facility is operating, which is spelt out in the conditions, the doors have to remain closed while they're operating. But again, I'll take that question on notice and I'll come back with some more detail.

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MS MILLIGAN: The information was actually given to us by the applicant. Their estimate is that with the fast-opening doors, they need to open, the truck needs to come in, they'll close, and then they need to open, truck goes out. And thinking at full capacity with the truck movements, they estimate the opening to be 5 hours a day. So, if we just take that as an assumption at this point, I guess I'm asking you the question, your comment that a lot of the risks are managed by the fact it's an enclosed building, does 5 hours a day opening change that view on any of that?

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MR RITCHIE: I mean, generally from an acoustic point of view, the facility – I mean, there are doors that will primarily be closed, but our conditioning will be saying that only while those doors are closed can the site be operating. So, from a noise impact, from an air impact, because they have to be shut while it's operating, I would say that the outcomes of the assessment would remain that those criteria would be addressed. But in terms of the particular 5 hours, I just want to take that away and take that on notice and look at that a bit more and come back to the IPC.

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MS MILLIGAN: Sure. Thank you.

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MR MILLS: Thank you, Chris. Sorry, Janett.

MS MILLIGAN: Let me talk about social impact, and acknowledging that the

applicant prepared a Social Impact Statement and the Department independently assessed social impacts and recommended management of those.

5 Can you just talk to us a bit more about how the community's views were considered in your assessment. You've already talked about the fact that the transport route was changed. You've talked about the fact that the building scale was altered. But we have heard a number of people talk to us – and this is not just an issue for the Department, of course – have talked to us about feeling as though maybe their views weren't heard or reflected. So, can you talk to us about how the
10 Department took community views in and considered them in your assessment?

MS LAGUNA: Yes, of course. This is Sheelagh Laguna here.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you, Sheelagh.

MS LAGUNA: A lot of what I suppose I was going to say potentially, as Chris has already covered around that. I mean, I suppose just a bit of background about how the Department undertakes an assessment. I mean, we do review all the submissions that are submitted, both objections and support. We also take on
20 board advice from government agencies who are the subject matter experts on various subjects. We take these views into account in our assessment. And they really form the focus of how we go about and what we really focus on as key issues in the assessment.

25 And I don't have any, I suppose, I don't know if you give me an example of an issue that wasn't, that people had said they didn't, that we didn't take that into account. But in general, we looked at everything very carefully. Take an example, air quality and noise, we knew that the community was concerned about those. And even though all the assessment was undertaken showed that for both air
30 quality and noise, those could be managed and that the criteria would be met, the various criteria for those different aspects, could be met. Because we knew the community was concerned, we recommended conditions to verify what is being predicted for both air and noise, for example.

35 And in terms of, you know, air quality, we recommended three different verification events after commissioning of the facility. So, after six months of commissioning, and after two years, and once again because it will take – the applicant has advised it will take some time to build up to its full capacity of
40 120,000 tonnes a year, that there will be a third verification event at maximum throughput capacity.

45 And that would mean that monitoring would need to be undertaken and that would be compared back to what had originally been proposed and assessed, to ensure that those were in line with each other and there was no, there are no additional impacts that hadn't been considered. And that would mean that if there were, that the applicant would have to go and fix those immediately. For instance, if any air quality impacts, they would have to upgrade their air quality management systems, you know, on the ground, the filtering systems and things like that.

And similarly with noise, there will be two verification events after three months and at full throughput, just to ensure that what we as the Department believe would be the outcomes, were indeed correct.

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So, that's just an example of how the – for instance, how our conditions have gone the extra mile to ensure that the community's views have been heard. But only once we were satisfied that there wouldn't be unacceptable impacts from various, you know, amenity impacts from various aspects.

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MS MILLIGAN: Okay, so you're saying there, once your assessment indicated that the impacts were, I guess, acceptable, you were reflecting the community's maybe lack of certainty about that, by making sure that you had stronger-than-normal conditions about proving that that in fact was happening once the facility was operational. Is that what you've just said to us?

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MS LAGUNA: Yes, that's correct.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay, thank you.

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MS LAGUNA: Yes.

MR MILLS: Thank you.

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MS SYKES: Chris and Sheelagh, I just had one question. Throughout the meetings, we've heard a number of community views that the proposal in general lacks adequate buffer zones. Could the Department please make a comment on how the topic of buffer zones were considered and addressed in the assessment?

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MS LAGUNA: Yes, this is Sheelagh here again. As we mentioned earlier, you know, that the facility is on industrial zoned land and is proposed to be fully enclosed. And our assessment showed that the potential amenity impacts could be appropriately managed, and the examples we just gave you earlier. And noting that the EPA would have an environmental protection licence which would regulate the facility. In terms of buffer zones, it's sort of something that is only really required if there are going to be impacts that would actually impact people within those buffer zones, for instance.

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We looked at things like lighting at night, that will be designed in accordance with Australian Standards. We looked at the site setbacks, which are in line with the DCP except at the front boundary, which are then offset by extra vegetation on a block of land opposite the site with the mounding.

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In terms of traffic, I suppose no buffer zones are really required, well, the traffic is travelling away from the community, up through part of the industrial area on the north sort of access road up to Douglas Road which is an industrial road and one of the main thoroughfares of the future SHIP area.

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So, I suppose, I mean, I don't know if the Commissioner would like to elaborate further on what a buffer zone, what the community considers to be a buffer zone, or what they considered would be necessary there.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** I think the community was reflecting on the potential impacts, amenity impacts, noise, traffic. And I think what they were saying was, could we be further away? If there was a buffer zone, we would be further away from some of these impacts?

10 **MR MILLS:** And I'd go so far as some people actually quoting other examples in other places and other states where it would in fact be kilometres away from residential, for example.

15 **MS LAGUNA:** Yes, I mean, I suppose every application is different and where it's located. In terms of the impacts at the nearest residences, all the amenity impacts comply with those. And it is zoned an industrial area right to the edge of the industrial zone. You know, no buffer zones were provided around the industrial zone. So, yes, I understand that in other areas and in other locations, there may be a buffer zone. But that is potentially in each site a specific issue.

20 **MR RITCHIE:** The other thing I'd probably add is that, I mean, the key for the Department's assessment is looking at those issues that Sheelagh's mentioned. So, air and noise. When we're assessing these projects, we have to work closely with other agencies that might have an approval or licensing role.

25 So, in this instance, being a scheduled activity, the proposal requires what we call an environmental protection licence from the EPA. And the EPA regulates air emissions, noise emissions, water quality issues. We engage with Water New South Wales and the Fire and ... And a lot of these issues have to be factored in, in terms of do they comply with what we call government guidelines or
30 government criteria.

The EPA was satisfied that a licence can be issued, and noting that from an acoustic point of view, the expectations is quite – the criteria is quite low, particularly at nighttime when there might be some processing but obviously no
35 trucks can be delivered. So, from a setback or a buffer issue, the key around assessing these projects is the amenity issues and can the amenity issues be satisfied.

40 Noting again that this is part of a thousand-hectare employment precinct, so there will be other developments over time. At the moment, there are concrete batching, there's timber milling, there's other waste operations as well. So there are types of proposals that are similar in terms of the uses etc. that are proposed to be located in this area.

45 Now, the other particular issue around some of the points that we raise is the particular concerns that the likes of the research facility and some of the residents had. And the conditions do turn itself to addressing those issues. And Sheelagh's

mentioned a lot around the verification, and that's a checking mechanism to make sure the expectations of the Department's and the outcomes of its assessments are demonstrated to be complying as they said they would.

5 And that's another way of ensuring that the impacts are met in terms of what our expectations and requirements are, and contingencies are added throughout that process if inevitably or sometimes it's happened, issues do pop up. So there's a mechanism by which further refinement has to be made.

10 Now, we in our space do a lot of industrial development, we deal with waste, and we do a lot of distribution facilities and industrial activities. And it is not unusual to have an interface with residential areas. We've got some particular locations in western Sydney where we do have to look at these very regularly, and required experience in dealing with that interface to make sure we're achieving
15 expectations around meeting those government requirements.

MR MILLS: Okay. Thank you. No further questions, I think, from the commissioners. Thank you very much, Clare, ah, sorry, Sheelagh and Chris.

20 That brings us to the end of this public meeting into the Moss Vale Plastics Recycling Facility. I want to thank everyone who has participated in this important process across the three days of the public meeting. Clare Sykes, Janett Milligan and I really have appreciated the input you've provided.

25 Just a reminder, it is not too late to have your say on this application. Do simply click on the 'Make a submission' portal on our website or send us a submission via email or post. The deadline for written comments has been extended twice by the Commission for this case, and written submissions will be received up until
30 5 p.m. Monday the 25th of November 2024.

In the interests of openness and transparency, we will be making a full transcript of this public meeting available on our website in the next few days. And at the time of determination, the Commission will publish its Statement of Reasons for
35 Decision which will outline how the panel took the community's views into consideration as part of its decision-making process.

40 Finally, a quick thank you to my fellow commissioners, Clare Sykes and Janett Milligan. And thank you to community members watching from the live site in Bowral and for those watching via our live stream. From all of us here at the Commission, enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED