



# Lithgow Environment Group Inc.

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*Preserving the Balance of Nature*

Committee Secretary

NSW Select Committee on proposed Energy from Waste Facilities

## **RE: LITHGOW ENVIRONMENT GROUP (LEG) SUBMISSION**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into the proposed Energy from Waste Facilities in regional New South Wales. Our submission documents our objection to the proposed location near Lithgow referred to in *a* to *j* of the Terms of Reference. Our overall position is that there is no suitable location for waste incineration in the state of NSW/Australia.

### **Lithgow Environment Group Inc - background**

The Lithgow Environment Group has for 20 years aligned with its vision statement of "Preserving the Balance of Nature", connecting and listening to its community and relevant government and non-government agencies with representatives on the following: Delta Electricity/EnergyAustralia CCC 15 years; Lithgow City Council Environmental Advisory Committee 16 years; Centennial Coal/BanpuAustralia stakeholder meetings 18 years; Nature Conservation Council Climate & Energy Working Group 7 years; UWS Lithgow Campus/Lithgow Transformation Hub Advisory Committee 2 years, Lithgow & District Community Nursery 9 years.

### **West Lithgow Precinct**

Give Lithgow a break, the previous state government *imposed on* this community without consultation the [West Lithgow Precinct](#). Whilst the map was revoked the Precinct remains with a recent proposal to include the decommissioned Wallerawang Power Station/[Greenspot](#). Lithgow Environment Group opposes this proposal but recommends a Tourism and manufacturing Precinct aligning with [Lithgow City Council Emerging Economy Plan](#). It is time governments supported Lithgow with immediate funding injections to a circular economy pathway. ie. provide employment by cleaning up and revegetating those areas of **current** and **historic** contamination by coal mining and coal fired power production. Generate immediate training funding to local educational institutes for transitioning older workers and imperative for our young so they can remain with their family in our community. As with funding for true forms of renewable energy aligning with [EnergyAustralia Climate Transition Plan](#)

### **Lithgow Environment Group and community object to all forms of Energy from Waste infrastructure**

This community has risen previously opposing any forms of waste incineration since 2017 with the first ARENA funded feasibility study by EnergyAustralia Mt Piper Power Station. The project did not proceed due to strong community opposition to this form of energy<sup>1</sup>. In 2022 the community rallied again opposing a waste to energy proposal by Cleanaway at Greenspot, the former Wallerawang power station site. The community's voice was heard and Greenspot is currently turning the page and transitioning to a sustainable location [Projects - Greenspot](#)<sup>3</sup>

## **Waste to Energy is a finite resource versus other available options**

Waste-to-energy incinerators are neither clean energy, nor renewable energy, nor safe energy. They undermine the recycling and reuse sectors, entrenching *an unsustainable linear economy* and increase deadly air pollution. International experts – Zero Waste Oz<sup>2</sup> working on climate, health and the environment warn that we need to urgently move to a more sustainable and regenerative circular economy.

Waste to Energy **is not a renewable energy** - transporting a finite rubbish issue from one site to another site increases additional toxic emissions and toxic ash residuals.

Communities around Australia and the world are embracing the changes already away from oil-based plastics leading by example with producing products that are compostable or recyclable, they want this change. **We ask for that change with a legislative directive timeline end date from plastic products from government/s now.**

## **Let's explore some innovative Australians making that change with alternatives,**

that can help reduce our reliance on plastic and promote a more sustainable lifestyle:

Hemp: [Margaret River Hemp Co | Australian Hemp Products & Articles](#)

[The natural products that could replace plastic \(bbc.com\)](#) Stone wool, Mycotecture, Urine bricks, A greener particleboard,

[Hemp Plastic: What Is It & How Is It Made? \(herb.co\)](#)

Endless research potato starch, corn starch, pineapple residuals, ...

## **Lithgow is located in the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment and Sydney Basin Airshed**

The Lithgow LGA is located in the headwaters of the Coxs River which supplies drinking water to 5 million Sydney water consumers. Whilst the Lithgow LGA comprises <1% of the land area of NSW, it supplies drinking water to 60% of the state's population of 5 million people.

Adverse water pollution issues in the Coxs River and Sydney drinking water catchment associated with coal mining and coal-fired power generation have been comprehensively documented over many years. Waste Incineration produces far more toxic and persistent pollutants than coal, which will only exacerbate already high current and historic pollutant loads.

The Lithgow LGA is also located in the Airshed of the Greater Sydney basin – home to 5 million people. Prevailing winds have historically resulted in air pollution from coal-fired power stations in the Lithgow (and Hunter) regions accumulating in the Sydney airshed. The Cumulative impacts of emissions from trucks, vehicles, aviation, industry, and bushfires have already led to dangerously high air pollution levels in the Sydney Basin, well documented during the 2019 bushfire season.

Burning Sydney's garbage in the Lithgow region will inevitably result in the pollution of Sydney's airshed and drinking water catchment, at a time when Climate Change is likely to increase the intensity and frequency of bushfire impacts on air and water quality.

## **Long term impacts to financially disadvantaged and future burden on NSW health system**

Modelling cannot give a 100% guarantee that no harm will come to those who do live in the proposed and surrounding villages – population 5,500 in particular financially disadvantaged who do grow their own vegetables/fruit/eggs/milk/poultry/meat to live within their means.

This proposal to contaminate people's self-sufficient food production will increase financial vulnerability for all individuals trying to manage with what they have, and place unacceptable burdens on those who are financially disadvantaged. This will result in an increased demand for financial support, and health care needs. Individuals will lose the means to maintain their independence, lifestyle, loss of value and worth. Energy from Waste is not inclusive of the Lithgow nor any host community, with likely individual impacts including loss of business opportunities, lifestyle, loss of worth, increased medical needs, and premature deaths.

### **Lithgow is Transitioning to Renewable Energy:**

Lithgow is transitioning away from coal, trying to clean-up its image, promoting itself as a 'tree-change' destination, and remains well-placed within the NSW grid infrastructure to continue to provide sources of renewable energy, continuity of employment, and sustaining a viable economic future. All of the above align with the need to take urgent action on climate change, eliminate current CO2 and other pollutant emissions, rehabilitate current and historic toxic coal-ash repositories, compensate for the loss of groundwater and surface water and endangered Temperate Peatland Swamps on Sandstone due to longwall coal mining.

Substituting pollution created from burning coal with infinitely more-polluting burning of waste is contrary to all the above objectives, and in the opposite direction this community is seeking.

Lithgow has a number of current renewable projects in various levels of progress:

[Wallerawang 9 Battery Energy Storage System \(BESS\) Approved August 2022](#)

[EnergyAustralia \(BESS\) Mt Piper Power Station preparing EIS](#) now approved

[EnergyAustralia Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project Feasibility Study](#) EIS to DPPI 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2026

~~[Banpu Energy Australia Pinecrest Solar Project Lidsdale preparing EIS](#)~~ withdrawn . [Home | Pinecrest BESS](#) prepare EIS

[SSD Recommendation NEOEN Great Western Battery Wallerawang](#)

[TETRIS Ben Bullen Wind farm integrated wind, solar and storage project](#)

[Sunny Corner Wind Farm - Someva Renewables](#) prepare EIS

Waste-to-energy is not a renewable, clean, nor safe form of electricity production. Facilities will produce a relatively small amount of electricity at the highest environmental & human health costs, and leave behind a toxic legacy of contaminated land, surface and ground-water, and air pollution.

### **Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area (GoS SCA)**

Recently gazetted in May 2022 by the NSW government, the Gardens of Stone (GoS) SCA opens up enormous opportunities for NSW from this previously untapped natural asset. Lithgow is surrounded by National Parks, SCAs, and State Forests, bordering on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWH).

The GoS SCA borders on 2 sides both the West Lithgow Precinct and Greenspot/Mount Piper Power Station. A highly polluting toxic waste incinerator is hardly a welcoming sight for visitors seeking a clean green nature-based experience! Waste incinerators pose a major threat to Lithgow's tourism.

Lithgow City Council through LEEP are championing the directional change, diversifying and utilising its natural areas not only nationally but as an international low impact nature tourism destination.

## Recommendations:

- Remove all forms of Energy from Waste as being considered clean or renewable energy.
- Minimise polluting forms of industry in Sydney drinking water catchment and Airshed.
- Legislate National targets for waste minimisation, waste recycling & resource recovery.
- Inject funding to support a Lithgow International Climate Change Research Science Centre.

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> [Statement: Waste to energy projects | EnergyAustralia](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [What is the best disposal option for the "Leftovers" on the way to Zero Waste 2017](#)  
[best\\_disposal\\_option\\_for\\_leftovers\\_on\\_the\\_way\\_to\\_Zero\\_Waste.pdf \(zerowasteoz.org.au\)](#)  
[Zero Waste Town: Power of Recycling in Japan \(youtube.com\)](#)  
[International Day of Zero Waste | United Nations](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Projects - Greenspot](#)

Yours sincerely

Chris Jonkers & Julie Favell

Community Engagement Officers

on behalf of Lithgow Environment Group Inc.