



**Lithgow Environment Group Inc.**  
**PO Box 3081 Bowenfels, NSW 2790; Incorporated Association No. 9892192**  
*Preserving the Balance of Nature*

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam.

**Re: Lithgow Environment Group (LEG) submission – Waste Reduction & Recycling Policies**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for the Federal Governments – Waste Reduction & Recycling Policies.

**Lithgow Environment Group Inc - background**

The Lithgow Environment Group for 19 years continues to align 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 us a break, the previous state government *imposed on* this community without consultation the [West Lithgow Precinct](#). Whilst the map was revoked the Precinct remains. Lithgow Environment Group rejects this proposal but recommends a Tourism and manufacturing Precinct. 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](#)

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

Waste to energy incinerators are neither clean energy, nor renewable energy, nor safe energy. It undermines 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 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 Airshed of Sydney Basin**

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 has 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.

### **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 aligning 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 of 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](#)

[EnergyAustralia Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project Feasibility Study](#)

[BanpuEnergy Australia Pinecrest Solar Project Lidsdale preparing EIS](#)

[NEOEN Great Western Battery \(BESS\) collating submissions DPE](#)

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

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

Recently gazetted May 2022 by the state government opens the opportunities with an untapped natural asset. Lithgow is surrounded by National Parks, SCAs, and state forests, bordering on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The GoS SCA borders on 2 sides of the West Lithgow Precinct area/Mt Piper Power Station. Hardly an invite to welcoming nature visitors!

Lithgow City Council 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 a clean or renewable energy source.**

**Minimise polluting forms of industry in Sydney drinking water catchment and Airshed.**

**Legislate National targets for waste minimisation, waste recycling, and resource recovery.**

**Inject funding to support 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](#)

Yours truly

Chris Jonkers Vice President & Julie Favell Natural Areas Officer

(on behalf of Lithgow Environment Group Inc.)