



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

Reply to: Chris Gambian
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Submission: Newcastle Power Station (SSI 9837)

About us

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is the state's peak environment organisation. NCC represents over 150 environment groups and thousands of supporters across NSW. Together we are dedicated to protecting and conserving the wildlife, landscapes and natural resources of NSW.

Our recommendation

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment should reject the Newcastle Power Station (SSI 9837) proposal for a 250 megawatt dual-fired power station operating on gas and/or diesel and ancillary infrastructure because it does not align with the NSW Government's commitment to tackling climate change and locks in emissions for decades.

As a signatory of the Paris Agreement, Australia acknowledges we must limit global warming to well below 2°C to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, and make efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that contributes to climate change. This is especially true when the entire supply chain of gas production is considered (Stock, et al., 2017). The drilling and extraction of natural gas from wells and its transportation in pipelines leads to methane leakage (UCS, 2014). Methane is 86 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period (Stock, et al., 2017).

This proposal comes after court ruling confirming a decision to refuse the Rocky Hill mine near Gloucester on the mid-north coast. Chief Judge Brian Preston stated: "The Rocky Hill Project is not in the public interest because ... it is contrary to the principles of ecologically sustainable development because the direct and indirect greenhouse emissions of the mine will contribute to climate change" (Preston, 2019). This ruling should act as a precedent for refusing projects based on their potential contribution to climate change. No new gas projects should be built and current levels of reliance on gas power in NSW must be reduced for Australia to play its role in limiting global warming below 2°C.

Estimated emissions from the plant range between 220,000 tonnes (equivalent to 70,740 cars) and 1.6 million tonnes (equivalent to 514 469 cars) of greenhouse gas emissions a year, depending on whether it operates as a peaking plant or continuously. Before a decision is made, the Planning, Industry and Environment Department should establish the mode of operation so the full impact of the proposal can be assessed.

Furthermore, the applicant states the preferred fuel source (gas) could be replaced by diesel fuel in the event of a gas supply disruption or when the power station is required to operate for extended hours. The Planning, Industry and Environment Department should recognise the role gas and diesel play in contributing to climate change and reject this proposal.

At the same time, the NSW Government and AGL should invest in more dispatchable clean energy projects. We note that AGL recently announced 200 MW of battery projects in NSW. Renewable energy backed by batteries and hydro storage is cost competitive with new gas, and provides a secure, affordable alternative to fossil fuels.

We recommend the Planning, Industry and Environment Department reject this proposal.



Chris Gambian

Chief Executive

Nature Conservation Council of NSW

References:

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