

Belinda Scott - Submission for the environmental assessment for AGL's Newcastle Gas Storage Facility.

From: "Geoff Dingle" <gedtrain@internode.on.net>
To: <plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 28/07/2011 9:59 PM
Subject: Submission for the environmental assessment for AGL's Newcastle Gas Storage Facility.
Attachments: AGL environmental Assessment Submission .doc

Please find attached my submission for the environmental assessment for AGL's Newcastle Gas Storage Facility.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission and for taking the time to read my comments. I would be happy to speak with your Staff officers directly if requested.

Regards,

Councilor Geoff Dingle

Major Projects Assessment,
Dept. Planning and Infrastructure.

To: plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

Reference Newcastle Gas Storage facility. Environmental assessment on public exhibition until July 29th 2011.

From: Councilor Geoff Dingle.
43 Kirrang Dr.
Medowie 3218.

Email address: gedtrain@internode.on.net

As a Councillor with Port Stephens Council, Chairman of the local Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management Committee and a member of the Newcastle Hunter Regional Botanic gardens Board, I make the following comments on the environmental assessment for AGL's Newcastle Gas Storage Facility. I'm not against the physical construction of this facility and appreciate its importance to guarantee gas fuel supplies to both the Tomago Aluminium smelter and Hunter energy supplies however do I have some issues with its location in relation to Preferred Koala habitat and safety considerations for potential catastrophic failure of systems leading to wholesale explosion of the gas supply.

The revised koala habitat mapping of the Tomago Aluminium buffer land which will house the AGL gas storage facility clearly shows substantial areas of preferred koala habitat and some very critical vegetation noted as preferred koala habitat containing species of eucalypt of great attraction to the local Koala population

I have visited the site with AGL representatives and spoken directly with the environmental consultants employed by AGL who have confirmed the presence of a Koala population on the site. I am also very familiar with the Tomago Aluminium smelter operations.

Koalas in the Port Stephens area are in decline and the evidence of this is based on the data collected by local koala care members over many years of direct observation and contact with the local koala population, this decline has resulted directly from man's interference principally pressure from development and whole sale clearing of preferred and supplementary habitat. Some of this clearing has not been able to be controlled by the CKP of M Plan which overrides the Environmental Assessment and Planning Act. A recent example was wholesale clearing of native vegetation on Defence land near the Williamtown airbase for expansion of the weapons/ fuel storage facilities involving thousands of hectares of native vegetation.

Tomago Aluminum have been located at their current site for 30 years and I was directly involved at the commencement of its operations as one of their initial employees so I'm very familiar with their environmental policies and the fact that the land surrounding the smelter including the site proposed for the gas storage was principally purchased as an environmental buffer zone to be protected to assist in offsetting any potential for impacts from fluoride emissions. The smelter operates under strict guidelines to maintain these buffer areas and to protect both the flora and fauna of the area including introduced species and domesticated animals.

While the smelter may at some time in the future apply to construct additional potline capacity this is highly doubtful as their existence is based on the guaranteed supply of cheap electricity and this source is drying up. A fourth plotline has been on the books for over ten years but is highly unlikely to materialize simply because smelting technology has moved on and additional electrical energy will be a lot more expensive under a carbon tax. Further expansion of the smelter to the North is not expected but space is available should this occur. The buffer land in question is zoned industrial and should therefore allow the AGL company to position the storage site to minimise any impact on the preferred koala habitat and this include the installation of road networks. I therefore request that you consider asking the applicant to relocate the proposed site to the west to exclude the preferred habitat and the access road also be relocated to avoid preferred habitat on the western boarder of the buffer land. We are only talking about relocating the site 200 metres and the road would only require 100 metres relocation to avoid prime habitat. The additional space is available and the proposed storage site is just conveniently nestled in the NE corner of the buffer land for subdivision purposes, since the facility is of great benefit to TAC they should be amenable to its minor relocation and they are in the business of producing aluminum not real-estate development.

The other concern I have is that the design of the facility must have a rigorous plan for dealing with a series of potential compounding incidents leading to potential catastrophic failure.

It is inevitable we will have conditions leading to loss of electrical power, this has occurred in the past and therefore reduced ability to cool and liquefy gas, high temperatures and wildfire in the local bush land could lead to increased release of gas to reduce pressure build up in the storage facility which is not designed as a pressure vessel. These conditions could lead all the way to potential catastrophic gas release, and explosion of the storage facility. While there are few residential people living in the immediate vicinity, a gas cloud leading to a "bleve" explosion would cause massive widespread damage and destruction and loss of life. The proposed backup generator could fail in hot bush fire prone conditions through fuel vaporization, line failure with the site potentially cut off from support services and back up fuel to continue to compress gas and maintain the liquid gas status.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission and for taking the time to read my comments. I would be happy to speak with your Staff officers directly if requested.

Yours Faithfully

Councilor Geoff Dingle

Phi 49 828468 Mob 0412 374990