

I object to AGL's request to extend the lapse date for the Dalton Power Project.

My reading of AGL's request is that they are seeking additional time to:

1. Evaluate new technology and market conditions
2. Consult with the community about potential modifications to the DPP
3. If required, lodge a more substantive project approval modification

New technology and market conditions

I understand that technology and market conditions have changed, however this has not happened over night. This project was approved nearly 5 years ago. Had AGL had their fingers on the pulse they should have been evaluating changes as they were occurring and be in a position now to act, not delay and talk. If change was required they should have been consulting with the community already and not waiting till the last minute.

I know nothing about AGLs method of operations other than they were recently fined for not declaring political donations when they applied for approval for the DPP (and having googled to check that I had that right I note that claims were made that they engaged in other practices (eg waste disposal) that appear to show disregard for community and the law).

However, as an outsider it seems that AGL at a minimum has shown poor project management skills in letting the DPP sit on the back burner till the last minute (how on earth would they go in meeting their commitments once work started?), and at the worst is showing total disregard to the community of Dalton and surrounds, the Minister and Department of Planning and Environment, and the Shire and other stakeholders by apparently manipulating the system and leaving things to the last minute so that people have limited time to respond, and AGL can 'buy' more time without having to compensate the Shire (which may or may not compensate the Dalton community) for the uncertainty residents continue to endure (and the impacts on families, health, business and property prices that ensue).

I also question how broad any evaluation of new technology would be. Would it for instance include renewable energy sources that may have less community and environmental impact, and require less financial investment? Or would it just look at how they can get more for less out of a gas plant? And if it's the latter, is extending the lapse date for a gas plant really in the best interests of the community, the environment and NSW, when there are other options that arguably should be considered too?

Technology has changed since the initial approval, but why allow time to review gas plant technology only? If a review is necessary to make this a viable operation, why not review whether a gas plant is the best alternative in the first place?

I also note that technology is not the only thing that has changed since this project was approved. For example, the environmental impact assessment was made over 5 years ago. It was before local projects sponsored by the NSW Department of Environment and Heritage to protect the yellow spotted bell frog and pygmy perch were commenced in the area. The world has changed and it is not appropriate to simply extend the lapse date beyond the time contemplated at the time of the project's approval.

Community consultation

I find it difficult to accept that AGL is concerned about community consultation, other than as a tick the box exercise to meet government requirements. If I am wrong I don't understand why they didn't start this process by letting the affected community know that they were lodging a request to extend the lapse date by two years. That is, they acknowledge poor practice in the past and talk about improved behaviour – but they're off to a pretty abysmal start. A cynic might suggest that community consultation buys more time during which they don't have to do substantive work and don't have to make significant payments under the project agreement to the Shire.

A more substantive approval modification

To me this is the crux of the matter. Having heard about AGLs prior behaviour, noted discussion reported in the media about the need for more power stations, and read the DPP MOD1 I believe that AGL has already decided that they want to make substantive or significant changes to the DPP and need time to do the necessary paperwork and 'sell' the revamped project to the community (or at least be able to tick the boxes to say they've had the conversations and given people a chance to put their view). While this MOD1 will not change the scope of the project, MOD2 is clearly already contemplated. A statement about no change to scope while technically correct is disingenuous ... not surprising in the circumstances.

If AGL is considering substantive changes then this request for extension is about circumventing fair process. I understand that the legislation that the DPP is approved under is no longer in place, and that approval processes for a new project would be quite different. An extension therefore has the effect of avoiding the current processes (and associated checks, balances and transparency) that the government and the community consider to be appropriate for this type of project.

The legislation has been changed for a reason. No doubt a transition period exists so that entities that received planning approval and made genuine commitments and possibly commenced work are not disadvantaged. However, it is clear that that is not the case for AGL. No work has commenced and they are talking about delaying further to review, consult and in all likelihood apply for changes. An extension in these circumstances shows disregard for the reason the legislation was changed in the first place.

Further, if AGL is using an extension to bring a significant change to the table (what I imagine could effectively amount to a new project) it is denying other enterprises the opportunity to put a competing offer on the table (either in Dalton or elsewhere), and for any such competing offers to be evaluated. It is denying a level playing field, and it is denying NSW the opportunity to optimise investment decisions.

If AGL is satisfied that what they are contemplating is in the interests of NSW then they should apply under the new legislation and process.

Finally

I moved to Dalton a few years ago because I want to live in the country: away from heavy traffic, noise and pollution. I paid for that privilege. I am concerned about the impact the

project will have on my enjoyment of home and surrounds, about the impact on my health and my stock, and on the value of my property. In their application AGL acknowledges that an extension creates extended uncertainty for people like me. But they do no more than put those words on paper. They do not care.

Their application refers to socio-economic benefits to the community. Words. The people of Dalton are to a large extent farm workers, business operators, and professionals who commute to cities to work. There will be minimal if any employment benefit to the community. And if facilities are provided on site for employees, there will be minimal if any benefit to local businesses.

The only beneficiary of an extension to the lapse date would be AGL and an extension would prolong a benefit under legislation that no longer exists, and prolong the uncertainty about their future being experienced by members of the Dalton community and surrounds. I implore the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to refuse AGLs application.

Thank you.