

SUBMISSION

I am writing to lodge my objection to AGL's proposed extension of time for the commencement of work on the proposed gas fired power plant project at Dalton (DPP), NSW – and my objection to the entire project – for the reasons outlined below.

1. AGL want to extend the 19 July, 2017 date for two years to “review the DPP in line with current technology and energy market circumstances” and “if required, lodge a more substantive project approval modification”. (MOD1)

- The original proposal is now more than seven years old. AGL should face the fact that their deadline was up; they had done nothing about the project in the intervening time, except cause worry to residents who have the proposed DPP hanging over our heads each and every day. Instead of merely being allowed to ‘extend’ past a due deadline, they should begin again with a new proposal incorporating up-to-date environmental assessments, plans and community consultation. If they haven’t handed their homework in on time, then they should face the consequences and go right back to their drawing board, not ask to be allowed to hand their homework in “two years later”.
- Any consideration of “current/new technology” should only be considered via a new DPP application process, and under the legislation and rules with which new proposals are considered. This should NOT be done under the legislation under which the original project proposal was approved, which has now been repealed.
- In the MOD1 AGL state the “the potential for regional blackout (similar to the recent blackouts in South Australia) increase as NSW become more reliant on wind and rooftop PV generation”. Yet this statement completely ignores a report by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), which says that the blackout could NOT be blamed on renewables, and that there is now a need to source additional security from new technologies – such as storage and demand response, along with large-scale solar, wind farms, and household solar and storage – rather than relying on traditional coal and gas plants. (<http://www.aemo.com.au/Media-Centre/AEMO-publishes-final-report-into-the-South-Australian-state-wide-power-outage>)

2. AGL want to ‘enable consultation with the local community, landholders and other stakeholders.’

- AGL think this is so important that they devoted almost one-third of their MOD1 proposal to this topic. Yet they have shown absolute disregard for this community in the past seven years and continue to do so. Their spiel in MOD1 is all empty rhetoric and public service speak that boils down to nothing.
- I am one of only two people that I know of in the community who actually received an email from AGL about the new proposal. Some of the locals heard about it through that email being forwarded, but most head of it in the newspapers, down the pub or over the neighbour’s fence. Even people who live right near the proposed site had not been notified, demonstrating a complete lack of communication and effort by AGL. It would not have been difficult to arrange for the local post office to deliver a letter to every resident giving them enough time to respond. Yet apparently, according to MOD1, in the last 7–8 years “AGL’s approach to community

consultation has improved in effectiveness and sophistication"! Has it? I see no evidence of this statement. And I don't count two emails.

- At our town meeting on 5 April 2017, the AGL representatives made little to no effort to actually answer queries, often giving prepared answers to completely different questions. Dismissive of the community's concerns, they were inconsiderate enough to talk between themselves when a local was giving a closing statement on behalf of the town, instead of listening respectfully. I don't call that effective community engagement.

3. AGL say that the MOD1 will "better enable the positive employment and other socio-economic benefits of the DPP to be realised."

- This is just more public service speak. What does it even mean? There won't be employment for any locals, other than the 'possible part-time cleaner' that AGL eventually admitted to when faced with this question the first time around, more than five years ago. I am told the plant would be constructed by Leighton's external construction crews. This is a farming region, not a construction zone with 250 construction workers magically on tap. The crews will bring their own camp cook, will not use local accommodation or catering, and will bring no income to the town. I also understand the plant will have 5–10 employees once operational, but is likely to be operated remotely, so which locals are being employed?
- What are the other supposed "positive socio-economic benefits"? According to MOD1, the DPP will "create \$291.3 million in value add GDP and household income effects"! Really? What does that mean in English? \$291.3 million for whom? The people of Dalton? Wow. Thanks! And what is a 'household income effect'? Will our household incomes rise because there is a massive polluting power plant four kilometres down the road? How fantastic! Or maybe they'll fall? Boo! Who knows, since 'effect' is such a non-specific word. If AGL can't even bother to explain these nonsensical statements they should under no circumstances be given approval for their scheme.
- As part of their listing under "socio-economic benefits", AGL say they will "adopt numerous stringent mitigation measures relating to the control of noise levels, air and water quality, traffic and transportation....etc". Excuse me? How, given that AGL will be the ones CAUSING all the problems that need mitigating, is this supposed to be a "positive socio-economic benefit"? Clearly, AGL do not know how to even structure a report under the correct headings. Yet they seek approval to build an unwanted, unnecessary, unappreciated polluting power station.
- Far from any socio-economic benefits, the prospect of another two years of uncertainty hanging over the community's head will be the complete opposite. Mental health problems and suicide rates in country towns are already too high. The worrying thought that we may still lose our beautiful clean and peaceful home adds to stress that we thought we were about to be able to put behind us, in July this year. Yes, with three months to go until we could relax, AGL decides that they will put in a last-minute proposal to keep their options open. Thank you so much for adding to our mental health and wellbeing, AGL.

4. AGL state that there will be "no change to the scope of the DPP as a result of MOD1".

- In true contradictory form, immediately after this statement comes this whopper: “the extended lapse date would enable.....a MORE SUBSTANTIVE modification which would include specialist studies of any modifications to the project scope”! Seriously? I question how anyone, let alone the Dept of Planning, can take AGL seriously with such a poorly worded application. “No change in scope” vs. “modifications to the project scope” - all in the one paragraph!

In addition to the above glaring inconsistencies, poor plain English communication and blatant lies promoted by AGL in their MOD1 proposal letter, below are my reasons for objecting to the proposal as a whole –that is, to the proposal to build the Southern Hemisphere’s LARGEST gas-fired power plant four kilometres from our village of Dalton.

1. To me, installing MORE fossil fuel-fired power stations flies in the face of commonsense, given the now obvious and startlingly frightening effects of climate change that are being felt worldwide. Each year for the last few years has been described as the ‘hottest year on record. In their Annual climate statement 2016, The Bureau of Meteorology state that “Australia's fourth-warmest year on record, with the annual national mean temperature 0.87 °C above average” and this was “was influenced by a combination of natural drivers and **anthropogenic** climate change” (<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/annual/aus/>).

To give an example of just one climate change impact, coral bleaching has reached never-before seen proportions. I went snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef in 1993. Twenty-four years later and the areas I saw are now bone white. These effects can no longer be ignored – and fossil-fuel-driven power stations are one of the biggest contributors to global warming. The United States Environmental Protection Agency states that: “the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities...is from burning fossil fuels for electricity” (<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>).

On a personal note, I suffered substantially from heat stroke symptoms as a result of this summer’s heatwave, on 42°C+ days. I developed breathing difficulties that lasted for 4 weeks afterwards and were stressful to the point of inciting anxiety attacks.

Even the CEO of the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), Audrey Zibelman, is promoting the idea of renewables and distributed generation; she is

“signalling an *end* for the need of those *peaking plants* that operate for just a few hours of the year, yet conspire to push Australia’s wholesale electricity prices to stratospheric levels. She is signalling that the business case of the generators – for so long based around getting 30 per cent of their revenue from 30 hours of pricing parties a year – will no longer be valid. Hello battery storage. Hello demand management. Hello a fast and responsive grid.” (<http://reneweconomy.com.au/how-aemos-new-boss-will-reform-australias-energy-vision-37484/>)

Three entire countries now rely on 100% renewable energy: Iceland, Costa Rica and a small island called Bonaire. It’s really possible to do this – it is no longer some future ‘pipe dream’.

The sun and the wind will never run out, unlike fossil fuels. And, there are many reports stating that solar and wind power are becoming cheaper to produce; for example, according to a report by Renew Economy,

“...utility-scale solar-generated power, certainly in sunny parts of the world, appears to be cheaper than wind and both are cheaper than fossil-fuel generated power” (<http://reneweconomy.com.au/turning-point-solar-power-now-cheaper-wind-energy-94039/>).

There has to be a point at which governments, including ours, say “enough is enough”, and begin to act. For the sake of our plant and future generations, that action has to be rejecting approval for new fossil-fuel generation, such as AGL’s initial proposal for the DPP, and bestowing approval upon renewable energy projects.

2. Closer to home, the toxic emissions from the proposed DPP, apart from their global warming capacity, are a major concern to our family. We have two young children to whom we would like to give the healthiest childhood possible. My husband suffers from asthma, which would worsen if the air quality drops. Apart from the known effects of emissions on breathing, particulate matter can contaminate water supplies, and we rely on rainwater harvested from our roof.

A recent study by the Purdue University and the Environmental Defense Fund (<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.est.6b05531>) showed that natural gas power plants emit up to 120 times more methane than facility-reported estimates. How many power stations have been granted approval under assumptions of the levels being up to 120 times LESS? And what if further more precise research shows that the levels are even higher, or more toxic, than before? The one sure thing we know, is that we don’t know how much we don’t know. That is the whole concept behind the precautionary principle. But when there’s money to be made, that goes flying out the door, of course. Please don’t approve a plan that will make millions for one company at the cost of an entire community.

3. I have lived in Dalton now for 15 years. We moved here from Canberra, attracted by the prospect of affordable housing, and a quiet country environment. My husband suffers from tinnitus and I have hearing loss in certain frequencies that makes me susceptible to shock from certain sounds. I love that here, I can enjoy hanging my washing out in the breeze on a sunny day, feel the fresh air rush past and soak up the warmth of the sun on my face. I love that I can hear birds, sometimes dogs, and occasionally lawn mowers in the distance. I don’t want to hear the noise of gas turbines humming, screeching or whining – whatever noise they may create. Not even knowing the type of noise is a serious concern. AGL never properly answered questions in the past about noise levels, except to say that some residents might expect “windows rattling”.

According to the Hearing Health Foundation (<http://hearinghealthfoundation.org/>), “noise triggers a stress response in the amygdala, a region of the brainstem... Over time, stress (often from transportation and industrial noise) can be particularly toxic. Noise-induced stress has been implicated in the development of disorders of the cardiovascular system, sleep, learning, memory, motivation, problem-solving, aggression, and annoyance.” Please

don't approve a power station that will cause noise-related stress to the people and animals that live in this area.

4. If the DPP goes ahead, people won't want to live here anymore. If forced to sell our house at low prices in the wake of the DPP we could not afford to buy anywhere else. We'd be lucky to sell it for \$100,000. What can we buy for that, anywhere else? I make a living and support my family of four on a freelance editor's income of approximately \$50,000 per year. We can ONLY do this because we moved to Dalton and found a cheap, old house that fixed up as a labour of love, because we love this place. I can now spend all day in this beautiful place, interspersing work with pulling out a few weeds, enjoying some sewing, walking the dog in our local woodland reserve, or swinging in the hammock in the vegie garden. If we had to move, my husband and I would have to both find fulltime work, and we would lose our peaceful, simple life, our peace of mind, and precious time with our two children.

5. We currently have a wonderful community that supports each other. As past president and now secretary of our local school's P&C association, I have often experienced the warmth and willingness to help of this community over the years. I love that I can ring up one of the local ladies and say "Hi. Any chance you can make us some cakes for our school fete?" and that tray after tray of delicious home-baked goodness turns up on the cake stall like magic early in the morning, no favours requested in return. I love that I can give my neighbour a dozen duck eggs and in return receive a dozen extra chook eggs, or a basket of home-grown cucumbers. Small things like this are the heart of our community and would be destroyed by the building of the DPP.

I'm very proud of our local community for standing up to AGL. It's a stressful, time-consuming, and brave thing to do. In thinking of our community, I think about the words of scientist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has". We have such a group right here, in my little town.

I could write much more about the things I love and am grateful for in this community, this town, this environment. But I don't need to. We all have things we love. And they are all worth fighting for.

Apart from being a wonderful place to live and a friendly community, living here, in this peaceful and clean environment, has been a major influence in my efforts to tread as lightly as possible on our Earth. For instance, I rarely travel, on principle, as travel is also a major greenhouse gas contributor. I buy second-hand instead of new, or I don't buy at all. I make almost all our clothing from recycled fabrics or buy clothes from opshops. We make vegie stock from our food scraps and then give the leftovers to the chooks. We try to create minimal rubbish, ripping up paper and cardboard for the compost, recycling everything else. I grow some of our own vegies and all our herbs. I tear up worn-out clothes for rags and darn holes in woollen socks. Hell, I even crochet dishcloths from opshop balls of wool. Vinegar and bicarb soda are our only household chemicals. We installed solar hot water and hand-built double-glazed windows to reduce our electricity usage, which my bill tells me that for our family of four is less than an average Australian household of one.

And in the words of my 10-year-old daughter, who also wanted to say something about the impact of the proposal: "I'd like to say swear words, but I'm not allowed. We don't have enough money to move and we would be stuck in a stinking town of muck if they built the power station. I love our wildlife and I don't want the poor animals to die from gas poisoning."

I tell you all these things only to give you a sense of our family's care for our fragile environment. The mere thought of this proposed power plant pumping out tonnes of greenhouse gases, adding to global warming and climate change, fills me with the worst sense of unease and dread. And the thought that huge companies such as AGL could instead be investing in research into more reliable renewable energy, fills me with pure anger.

In closing, please don't support AGL's proposal. The livelihoods, health and mental wellbeing of my family and of the whole community depend on you. This power station will destroy our precious community. It shouldn't be built so close to our town. To ANY town. In today's possibilities and realities of renewable energy and battery storage, it shouldn't be built at all.

Thank you for reading my submission.

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