

12 April 2017

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Dalton Power Project MOD1
Assessment Type: Part3AMod
Project Type: Transport, Energy, Water & Telecommunications > Electricity Generation
Application Number: MP 10_0035 MOD 1
Exhibition Start: 16/03/2017
Exhibition End: 13/04/2017
Post Code: 2560 (This is the Incorrect Post Code, should be 2581)

To Whom It May Concern

I wholeheartedly object to the proposed application to extend the lapsing date of the approval for the Dalton Power Project by 2 years of Mod 1 for the Gas Fired Power Station proposed to be built on Walshs Road, Dalton.

My husband and I moved to Gunning from Padstow in Sydney in January 2011 with our nine year old daughter and five year old son.

We escaped Sydney and the pollution bowl that we lived in, which was located near Davies Road, Padstow in the Bankstown Local Government Area with the hope of cleaner air, cleaner food, free from pollution and a rich country and community involved lifestyle for our two precious children. We also loved the aesthetic qualities of the grasses, trees, the hills and the wide open blue skies.

We rented for a couple of years in Gunning, deciding that we wanted to sell our Sydney home and make a total tree change to the Gunning and/or Dalton area.

The Gunning and Dalton communities embraced us wholeheartedly. My husband had transferred his employment and I found part-time volunteer work locally that transformed into permanent part-time work. The kids enrolled in Gunning Public School, playing weekend soccer in Goulburn and we joined in other activities associated with the towns of Gunning and Dalton. We dreamt of the next step and sold our home, leaving Sydney forever.

We were shocked in 2012 with the proposal of the Dalton Power Project, being a gas fired power station and joined the public fight against it including attending many meetings including the Planning Assessment Commission. We believed there were no long term benefits in this development being constructed in this beautiful rural area and that while it had been regularly spouted by AGL that the community would benefit from jobs, this was clearly untrue, with the admission that there may be a cleaning job attached to the site.

While we looked for property, we were deterred from purchasing available blocks near Dalton including along the Gunning-Dalton Road, or even closer to Dalton township, due to the dark cloud hanging over the future of Dalton, and the possibility of our seeing the development from any home we built, settling instead for acreage just out of Gunning along the Collector Road.

As our lives progressed and our plans moved on, including the building of a brand new home, we were heartened that while the development was conditionally approved, there was deferred construction of the proposed gas fired power station due to the energy demand downturn at the time. The friends that we had made living in Gunning township and also in and around Dalton were finally more comfortable and less stressed about their longer term futures.

As older people passed away or moved from the area to be closer to family, more people moved into the area (perhaps encouraged by programs supported by the NSW State Government encouraging people to move to regional NSW) and built new homes or purchased houses for sale and invested in renovating them, upgrading both the homes and gardens. Many new couples started their families or expanded them, growing the numbers attending our schools, preschool and using the locals businesses. These people were not aware of the proposal as it had not been focused on in the public arena for nearly four years and was not a topic of general conversation and AGL has had no contact with the community to let them know what they intended to do.

To suddenly put this local anxiety back in the public arena with a two week submission period was deplorable. Even as this has been extended to four weeks due to public outcry, along with normal family activities, it has been difficult to find time to address my concerns for my family and also for the communities of Dalton and Gunning.

Whatever money is proposed to be paid to the Upper Lachlan Shire Council in the so called "Community Enhancement Fund", the damage done to the community spirit will decimate the current level of community enriched lives that we, the citizens of this area benefit from and involve ourselves in; whether it be the Gunning Garden Club, various Rural Fire Services, Gunning Roos Football Club, Dalton Craft Group, Creative Gunning, the Gunning Lions Club, the Gunning Golf Club, 1st Gunning Scout Group, MBK Soccer Club, the Upper Lachlan Wood Guild, Gunning Tennis Club, Gunning Show Society, Gunning District Association, Gunning Public School P&C, Dalton Public School P&C, Landcare etc etc etc.

Given that I work in Gunning and have connection with many people and organisations in the area, I feel this development will destroy people's long term positive outlook; increase the real possibilities of depression and suicide; make others who look at the area less likely to want to invest their money or their lives, start their families, or continue to live in this peaceful area. This will dismantle the carefully tendered social networks of support that exist through many volunteers participating in many organisations, The pollution that will come from or is perceived be a result of the power station will make both rural and residential properties devalued and unsaleable. Already, since this extended proposal came about, I am aware of two houses that were proposed to be built in Dalton that have been placed on hold due to the uncertainty of the development.

With Australian Bureau of Statistics expecting this area to grow by 1.5% by 2036 (notably mostly in the 0-4 age group), and much of this growth expected to come from the Gunning/Dalton area due to our proximity to both Sydney, Goulburn, Yass and the ACT, it is ridiculous to place this area in the position where it becomes unappealing to possible residents.

Tourism, which has become increasingly important to the area through the movement of the grey nomads, will be impacted. People have already stated that if built, they will be deterred from coming to stay. International flights are now coming into Canberra and the Gunning and Dalton area is a very attractive area for day trippers from both Sydney and Canberra wanting to experience “real” rural Australia. This will also be impact on the tourist numbers to the Upper Lachlan Shire as Gunning is considered the gateway to smaller villages dotted around the area.

The Upper Lachlan Shire Council and adjoining council areas sitting on the Great Dividing Range already contribute considerably to the generation of power through wind and solar farms, some of which have been constructed since the five year approval was put in place.

This proposed extension has already impacted my family, making both of my children concerned about the future of our town and their long term future in it. I have found it hard to sleep with anxiety and worry, and no doubt if the development were to go ahead, this would escalate. I wonder for the equity my husband and I have invested in our property and what impact the loss in value will have on our long term financial security.

The Gunning and Dalton area is about clean air; clean food; clean fibre (note the many merino graziers) and clean fun.

While I have attended many of the AGL consultations, I am confused about what they intend to seek an extension for, as even at the last Upper Lachlan Shire Council meeting on Monday, 10 April which was held in Gunning, where Tony Chappel, AGL Head of Government and Community Relations stated something like “we are not even sure that it will be a gas fired power station”. What? Really? What? Will it be some other power development? Will existing plans be substantially modified from what has already been proposed and the approvals that have already been put in place? I think AGL should be forced to get new Environmental Assessments and economic impact assessments done and seek new planning permission. Instead AGL appear to be piggybacking on their current approval.

I am also concerned that recent findings of the Southern Pygmy Perch which were found near Dalton by a friend of my daughter will also be impacted, as will other wildlife that have re-established in the area largely due to the work of organisations such as the local Landcare.

I find it unfathomable that the NSW Planning and Environment Department would allow our real communities with real people with real connection to each other to be left in limbo for a further two years while AGL speculates what they might do in the Australian Energy Market. Have they not already had five years to begin their development?

Fundamentally, I believe they are having a bet both ways and care little for the collateral damage that our communities will suffer, which will be enormous.

This community already has too many uncertainties with droughts and floods. Do not compound this.

I urge you to deny this extension of approval.

Yours sincerely
Vanessa Mackay

