

Forward Perspective of proposal

The proposal is not consistent in anyway with providing a forward thinking solution to power security at the state or federal level. It seeks to use legacy gas infrastructure and marginal generation technology to provide a mechanism for AGL to profiteer from contrived or actual power shortages in a way that does not deliver value to anyone other than AGL and its shareholders in the short term.

They did not proceed with the original planning consent as there was not suitable demand to generate enough profit to justify its cost. If anything, this is a less likely proposition now given the consumer and market shifts to renewable energy that has occurred since its original proposal which is now more than 5 years old.

The battery technology which now allows storage of power renewable power on a scale that is practicable was not even a consideration at the time of the original proposal. It was a developing technology but has moved rapidly to a proven and emerging technology in that time window. It will have been surpassed again during the lifetime of AGL's proposal let alone its implementation which further highlights AGL focus on short term profit taking over any other justification for the project.

Even from my own limited understanding of the technologies and options available to AGL, it appears to be a short sighted and opportunistic proposal that will ultimately fail to deliver even for AGL, doing so at huge opportunity cost and unquantifiable collateral damage. What is perhaps even more disturbing is that we as electricity consumers, all over Australia will pay for the folly of this in the long run.

Community Supportive Solution

Dalton, Gunning and the Upper Lachlan Shire in which they are located host a large number of renewable energy resources namely significant solar and wind power projects. These provide clean power to the state and the nation along with providing significant community contributions that have advanced the Gunning, Dalton and Upper Lachlan Shires.

There have been community objections to these projects based on their impact on the visual environment as well as perceived health and property valuation issues that have been accepted but with opposition. They never had the possibility of large increases in pollution and contamination across the whole spectrum of life in Dalton and to a slightly lesser degree in Gunning and the remainder of the Upper Lachlan Shire. Why should and how could a community ever accept such a situation with little additional compensation, no employment and total disregard for the impacts.

The AGL proposal seeks to make use of gas infrastructure that the local community does not benefit from but simply hosts to degrade community living standards with little or no opportunity for even tangible community benefit or additional support.

To take a slightly longer term view of AGL's disregard for the surrounding community, they are leveraging grid connection infrastructure that was created to support the renewable energy projects and may ultimately preclude additional investment and benefit in this regard.

Gunning and Dalton's Existing Contributions

It is perhaps a lesser known and understood fact, that Gunning and Dalton already are major contributors to state and federal infrastructure.

Gunning is located between the main North-South railway line for goods and passenger traffic and the Hume Highway which provides the road based equivalent. Dalton is so closely located to be largely impacted by similar pollution on a slightly lesser scale. While neither pass directly through either township, these pollution effects are felt daily and are not considered by the AGL proposal.

As has already been mentioned, Gunning, Dalton and Upper Lachlan support many renewable projects and have endured the disruption and negative aspects of such developments over a long period of time. The AGL proposal seeks to add more in this regard – hasn't the community been asked to absorb enough?

Additionally, Gunning and Dalton have both offer a significantly different lifestyle for workers who are willing to commute to the ACT for employment and thus created a rural and affordable enclave for families that would find the challenges of living within the ACT's borders too great. To put it more succinctly, they are providing housing, schooling and other community facilities in a way that is unique and reflective of the community spirit that resides there. This is all disregarded by AGL who see it at as a low population rural area that has little value. We are not large in number but have decided to live here which AGL has played 'lip service' to caring about in pursuit of questionable profit gains.

From Upper Lachlan Shire's perspective, Gunning and Dalton also are growths areas within the shire which, without such additional population, hosts an ageing and declining population. The AGL proposal has the potential to further exacerbate this

The AGL proposal does not consider the value of these contributions be seeking to devalue and ignore the these existing contributions. No credible account of this is in the proposal and its basis ignores the impact of overlaying such a project onto this landscape.

Their proposal seems to focus more on a myopic view that all positive factors are in place for its project to be built rather than at what cost economically and societally.

I have made no mention of the other signification contribution the area makes and that is to primary production. Over our history, it has been the mainstay of exports and continues to contribute a significant and enduring livelihood for a great many farm families. It seems somewhat short sighted to introduce a highly polluting and short term project into such an environment with the only concession being that live stock will be able to graze on the land surrounding the gas fired plant rather than considering the impact to the animals or the farmers and their workers' health which will far exceed the life of the plant.

Community Aspirations

Gunning and Dalton are areas that are steeped in history. You may ask why this has any relationship to whether a Gas fired power station is built nearby.

The simple answers are these. Gunning receives many day and overnight tourists. One of the main reasons that it attracts so many is the history it holds as reflected in its heritage streetscapes, its transportation, farming and exploration historical connections.

These two small villages have quite a small combined population of less than 1,000 people but the tourism it receives both through passing day visitors and overnight campers, sustains quite a vibrant and employing local business community.

The sheer depth of the heritage appeal and historical connections, remains largely untapped. It would be a significant detractor for these visitors and the community that is sustained by them if such a project as the AGL gas fired plant was to go ahead. I am sure that the community would be immediately affected along with the viability of the villages and the shire as whole. In the converse, the construction of the plant does not offer any compensatory employment or opportunity.

Another slightly hidden impact is that, during construction, there will be significant traffic and other disruption for a sustained period on top of the long term environmental impacts. Little detail has been provided by AGL regarding the size or duration of this construction impact which already may be threatening the viability of the communities.

Regional Planning

The AGL gas fired power station contradicts the Regional Councils Strategic Plan and offers no explanation why. It seems to have ignored that it has a relationship with the region but rather is all about the opportunities for AGL. The Regional Council Strategic Plan seeks sustainable growth through renewable energy opportunities but AGL seeks to threaten the growth prospects for the entire shire and considers it of lesser importance to the 5 jobs it may create in the short term. It is clear that it does not integrate in anyway with any other view of the area and purely is opportunistic at best.

Conclusion

It might be easy for AGL to answer this response by saying that I am purely against Gas fired power and AGL. This is simply not true.

Having worked for power distribution companies, I have seen that they have often seen renewable energy investment difficult and problematic. Gas is seen as plentiful and relatively cheap with the selection of a tactical solution as easier to justify and manage. Unfortunately, a long history of such an attitude of limited risk taking and lack of concern for pollution has lead largely to the situation that now confronts us.

It is not simply not reasonable or justifiable to ignore technologies that will provide long term outcomes anymore that require some change to companies' traditional bases. Gas is a polluting and legacy technology that is not consistent with innovation or long term community make outcomes. It offers some utility over coal fired technology and its ability to quite meet power demands but this often is fraught with manipulation by the energy providers such as AGL.

What Australia needs is renewable based, long term sustainable solutions that offer supply and consumption side solutions. Anything less in an investment the size that AGL is proposing is simply not justifiable or an efficient use of what ultimately is Australian consumer funds is folly of self-interest. To give AGL more time, is to invite more self-interest.