

TRANSITION NEWCASTLE



Submission Opposing the Fourth Coal Terminal for Newcastle

As a group promoting a transition to strong communities able to thrive in a low carbon future, Transition Newcastle strongly opposes the construction of a fourth coal terminal in Newcastle. We need to focus on finding alternatives to a carbon based economy and protecting our food security rather than expanding the coal industry.

We do not believe that constructing another coal terminal supporting an expansion of mining in the Hunter Valley is a step in the right direction. We need to reduce our reliance on coal and there will never be a "good" time to do this. We believe the sooner we start this transition the better.

The Environment Assessment prepared for PWCS is an impressive document, but unfortunately we have little faith in it. We have too often seen these types of large projects under-estimating their social and environmental impact and justifying their approval by focusing on the economic benefits of their development.

We share the concerns expressed by others that:

- Locally, the fourth coal terminal project could see 41 more coal trains through Newcastle and Maitland every day, increasing dust related health problems such as asthma and other respiratory ailments.
- Pollution from coal affects all major body organ systems and contributes to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. We believe the Environmental Assessment downplays the impact of the project on air quality as it only considers the impact of increased coal train movements on residences within 20m of the rail line. The impacts of coal dust, however, are likely to extend far beyond these boundaries. More uncovered coal stockpiles will increase the amount of coal dust already affecting Newcastle suburbs. The precautionary principle should be applied to potential health impacts of the T4 project. Approval for the project should not be given until a comprehensive health and air quality study has been conducted across the Newcastle LGA.
- The Fourth Coal Terminal would facilitate many more large coal mines (the equivalent of at least 15 'mega-pits') in the Hunter and Liverpool Plains, which will threaten food and water security by destroying prime agricultural land, irreversibly damaging ground water systems and polluting waterways. We believe these are unacceptable risks.
- The costs of more mining to the State include greenhouse gas generation, loss of agricultural lands, blasting, noise, air quality, loss of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, visual impacts, loss and pollution of surface water and groundwater, damage to aquatic ecology, flora and fauna loss. T4 would provide coal for the equivalent of 15 more large power stations around the world, generating an extra 288 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year and fuelling the global climate crisis. Consideration of the impact of the 'Scope 3'

downstream emissions of coal exported via the T4 project should be included in the Environmental Assessment.

- The proposal carries the risk of mobilising toxic contaminants on Kooragang Island (the former BHP Steelworks site) and in the South Arm of the Hunter River. Too little is known about the risks to ensure the communities of Newcastle will be protected from toxic accidents, seepage and accidents. There is no plan to fully remediate the site.
- The coal exported would provide the capacity to feed at least 15 more large power stations around the world emitting 288 million tonnes of carbon pollution each year and fuelling climate change.
- The proposal could result in loss of habitat for 23 threatened species of fauna, including the Green and Golden Bell frog and the Australasian Bittern. It would also result in disruption to an ecologically significant proportion of the population of four migratory shorebirds listed under international conservation conventions.
- At least 11 species of migratory birds recognised by international treaties rely on the habitat at "Deep Pond" and its proximity to the Hunter estuary Ramsar site. Deep Pond is the only freshwater refuge in the Hunter estuary, yet a significant area of Deep Pond, would be lost to this project.
- After construction, the coal terminal will provide no additional employment. Rather, it is likely to result in the loss of other economic activities in the port, such as tourism, fishing and other shipping.

We believe the proposal should be judged on the environmental and social impact of the terminal and the expansion of mining it would lead to. We believe that these negative consequences are too great and thus oppose the terminal.

Transition Newcastle was founded in 2008 and now has over 600 supporters. We are part of the global transition movement promoting resilient communities able to address the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil. Our focus is generally on creating the future we want rather than being a "protest movement" that opposes projects like T4. The fourth coal terminal, however, is so inconsistent with the alternative vision we are working towards that we felt compelled to add our voice against the expansion of the world's largest coal port.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'GRS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Graeme Stuart
Transition Newcastle Convenor.