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This is a submission objecting to the proposed Port Waratah Coal Services Terminal 4 development in Newcastle (10_0215). The T4 proposal must not be approved due to the significant and unacceptable impacts as detailed below.

The 4th Coal Terminal would impact hugely on various habitats, endangered and threatened species and many migratory birds. Part of the terminal site is currently a National Park which includes critical habitat for migratory shore birds which needs to be protected. The project site includes valuable native vegetation, open water habitat, saltmarsh areas of mangroves and freshwater wetland areas. Also at least 11 species of birds rely on the habitat of Deep Pond and its proximity to the RAMSAR listed wetland- Deep Pond is the ONLY freshwater drought refuge in the Lower Hunter Estuary system. Due to its high value habitat and the protected species dependant on it, Deep Pond needs to be protected and looked after!

The environmental assessment downplays the effect the 4th Coal Terminal would have on air quality stating: " the T4 project is not expected to result in any criterion exceedences on any additional days of the year". It defies belief that the uncovered coal stockpiles for a coal loader of the size of T4 will not increase the amount of coal dust affecting Newcastle and other local suburbs.

The EA also only considered that the trains (of which there will be at least 41 extra a day over even the current rail haulage!!) would affect residences within 20m of the rail line. We live approximately 100m from the rail line at East Maitland and are already affected by the coal trains (both noise and dust) and so it is obvious that the air quality and noise pollution will further increase if the T4 proposal is granted. There has been no adequate air quality or noise pollution impact of increased coal transport as a result of the 4th Terminal. There needs to be further emissions modeling to report on the CUMULATIVE impact of this continuous flow of trains in terms of PM10s, PM2.5s, concentration of ultra fine particles and diesel combustion pollution- this should include both the residual coal dust in unloaded wagons as well as coal dust accumulated around the tracks over time that becomes airborne by the passage of trains.



Also by 2020 residents near rail lines will be exposed to an almost continuous intrusion of train noise and vibration. Round the clock movements will include 135 nightly pass-bys (around 32 added by T4) when most residents are trying to sleep (between 11pm and 7am). The EA states that the rail noise increases at night will push the 60dBA level impact zone from 320m to 370m from the tracks. This will increase significantly the number of residents exposed to noise disturbance-in 2009 the European standard for night noise was set at 40dBA!!!

The EA does not provide a Health Impact Assessment either whereby population profiles of affected residents near the site of the terminal and the rail corridor are defined and potential health impacts, especially on vulnerable groups (e.g children, those in aged care facilities, people with existing respiratory and cardiovascular problems etc) are assessed. Many of the local areas affected by the T4 proposal include low income and elderly residents, who are most disadvantaged in terms of health status and who are most vulnerable to the added impacts of air and noise pollution. The ER also fails to include risk information about short-term exposures to particulates, which, over a period of even a few hours can trigger cardiovascular-related difficulties as well as adverse respiratory events.

There are also a number of social and economic impacts which will occur on Newcastle and the Hunter Valley if this proposal is allowed to go ahead. Firstly, there is no additional operational employment associated with the T4 project. Secondly there will be a loss of other important economic activities already existing in the port such as tourism, fishing and other shipping with the increase in the number of coal ships loading at Newcastle. This project would facilitate an increase of at least 41 additional coal trains per day through the suburbs of Maitland and Newcastle. This increases the congestion on rail lines, noise and dust. There will be severe impacts on commercial fishing as a result of the expected loss of habitat and contamination in the wetland areas.

In conclusion there is no need for this project. The current pace of coal mining expansion in the Hunter region is already coming at a cost to the environment and human health that far outweighs the benefit of royalties it provides in return. To approve additional export infrastructure and destroy the ecological values of the T4 site takes no account of the potential decrease in the commercial viability of coal sales in the future. The associated loss of very good agricultural land in the Hunter Valley (as a result of the needed extra mines to “feed” T4) and consequently the loss of long term viability of sustainable food production in the area cannot be justified. For all these reasons the T4 proposal should be rejected.

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