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Rebecca Newman - Submission Details for don Owers

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✕ Department of Planning

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Content:
 15 Bimbae Close
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 19th April 2012-04-19

The NSW Department of Planning
 Submission on the proposed fourth coal export terminal by Port Waratah Coal Services in Newcastle
 Dear Sir,

I wish to object to this proposal on the following grounds;

Electricity made from coal and oil would be twice as expensive if we took into account damage to health and the environment. This is the findings of a 10-year study by the European Union into the hidden costs of power production that estimated the impact of pollution on factors such as crop yield and health. From issue 2301 of New Scientist magazine, 28 July 2001, page 17

Another study found that coal as an energy source, is far deadlier than nuclear power even when the Chernobyl melt down is included. Fine particles from coal kill an estimated 13,200 people in the US alone. This was the conclusion of an IAE study in 2002 which examined all energy sources from mining to waste disposal. For coal, the deaths came out to be 2.8 per 10 billion kWhr See New Scientist 26th March 2011 Based on this figure it should be possible to determine how many people will be killed as a result of our increased coal exports.

Europe is rapidly phasing out coal, Norway has huge reserves that it has agreed not to mine and Germany has agreed to eliminate subsidies to the coal industry by 2018. Even though Germany ranks seventh worldwide in coal production; first in the EU and fourth worldwide in coal consumption, its mining sector, just like in Australia, has been heavily dependent on subsidies and their withdrawal will effectively shut down the industry. While the subsidy issue has been a subject of recurrent debate in past decades, coal mining has also become inextricably linked with environmental issues and not just global warming. Coal combustion produces most of the worlds mercury contamination and according to the nuclear industry, emits more uranium than nuclear power systems. It also produces oxides of nitrogen and particulate emissions that are the cause of severe disease problems, especially in the big consumer countries like India and China. China is rapidly diversifying and although the press is full of reports of "a new coal power station every week" they neglect to mention that just as many old coal fired plants are being shut down. It is only in Australia, India and some US states that coal is still king, and even the US is confining coal fired power stations by limiting new construction to pollution limits. One has to ask how long our industry would last after a climate disaster like the loss of the Greenland ice sheet.

The federal government has made greenhouse gas reduction a high priority yet ignores the impact of coal mining. Most coal today comes from open cut workings. Emissions, primarily of methane, CO2 and carbon monoxide, start as soon as the overburden above the coal seams is stripped away. Conservative estimates suggest that these gases alone account for about twice the emissions of the burning of the mined coal. It gets worse: 98 per cent of what is dug out in an opencast coal mine is not coal, but perhaps 25 per cent (at least 10 times the amount of coal extracted) will be shale and mudstone with a carbon content of up to 50 per cent. This cannot be burned, because of its high ash content, but it still oxidises if exposed to air. Another conservative estimate is that this carbon source has the potential to emit three or four times as much CO2 as the mined coal.

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In Australia coal mining operations, both open cut and underground, have become progressively larger in scale and are creating many problems. Open cut mining, which may be up to 100m deep, uses very large amounts of explosives which can create toxic clouds of NOx gases. It also causes shattering of the rock formations beneath the mine. Long wall mining causes subsidence which can result in cracking of the rock surface above as well as below the mine by upwelling of the strata, both systems disrupt underground and surface water supplies. Rehabilitation of the land after open cut mining can never be successful because of the aforementioned methane which will continue to be discharged for decades and is a growth inhibitor for plants.

I would like to think that common sense will prevail on this issue but given the short sightedness that has marked our descent into a resource dependant nation I do not want to hold my breath waiting.

Don Owers

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Submission: Online Submission from don Owers (comments)
https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com?action=view_diary&id=28434

Submission for Job: #4399 Port Waratah Coal Services Terminal 4
https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com?action=view_job&id=4399

Site: #2406 PWCS Terminal 4
https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com?action=view_site&id=2406

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