

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed fourth coal terminal in Newcastle.

Lake Macquarie Greens oppose this development for a range of social, environmental and economic reasons.

Another coal terminal in Newcastle will require extensive expansion of coal mining throughout the Hunter region, impacting Hunter communities through mining operations and contributing to increased exposure to coal dust along the rail corridor.

The health impacts of coal mining and transport in the Hunter and the dangers from cumulative exposure to coal dust are well documented. Improved workplace health and safety regulations have minimised workers' exposure to deadly coal dust. But those regulations provide no safety to communities surrounded by mines where coal dust continues to rain down. Recent air quality studies have shown that Hunter residents are exposed to levels of pollution that regularly exceed World Health Organisation levels.

People living in coal-affected communities are more likely to suffer heart, lung and kidney cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular disease and birth defects. There is a direct link between long-term exposure to particle pollution and hospital admissions, emergency department attendance, asthma, respiratory and cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure and premature death. The University of Sydney has released a study showing there are serious health impacts for communities living near coalmines and coal combustion power stations. There is also the impact on amenity and people's quality of life. The expansion of open cut mines in the Hunter has had a detrimental impact on the lives of many. Numerous complaints have been lodged with the Department of Planning stating that the noise from twenty four hour mining operations is causing sleep disturbance and sleep deprivation.

A cancer cluster has recently been identified at the proposed site for the T4. Workers at Kooragang Island are nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer than the average population. Proceeding with the terminal will expose even more workers to a higher health risk.

The Hunter Estuary is already heavily impacted by industry and existing development, evidenced by the fact that that migratory shorebirds are declining more rapidly at the Hunter Estuary than at other similar locations in Australia. For example, the Eastern Curlew, which is listed on the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable, has documented declines of on average over 40% in 30 years in the Hunter Estuary. Similarly, Bar-tailed Godwit and Pacific Golden Plover are declining more at the Hunter than at other places throughout the country. Although the cause of this decline is debatable, it is unacceptable to potentially exacerbate the current rate of decline with an additional project in the vicinity of the wetland area. It is critical that further studies are established in order to first understand what is driving accelerated declines in the area, before any further approvals are allowed which may in fact simply continue to impact the wetland and its threatened flora and fauna species.

T4 would necessitate the construction of more mega mines in the Hunter Valley and Liverpool Plains. Coal mining is destruction on a vast scale rendering enormous areas of land useless for any other industry. Open cut coal mining completely eliminates existing vegetation, destroys the genetic soil profile, displaces wildlife and habitat, degrades air quality, and alters existing land uses like farming. It permanently changes the topography of an area and leaves behind a scarred landscape with no scenic value and a depleted soil. Mine tailings dumps produce highly acidic water, which can seep into waterways and aquifers. Collapsing tunnels cause subsidence of land surfaces and can have a devastating impact on landscapes, property values and rivers. During mining operations methane

can be released into the air – methane is more than 30 times more effective at trapping atmospheric heat as carbon dioxide.

And then we have the additional carbon dioxide load from coal processed through this facility. The science is telling us conclusively that human activity is changing the composition of our atmosphere resulting in changing weather patterns. 100% of scientific societies around the world agree on this fact. The consequential risk to our planet is not something to be ignored. To do so is breathtakingly reckless.

We are living at the end of the fossil fuel industry and now is the time to invest in alternatives, not locking us in by expanding coal infrastructure. Construction costs will take years of operation to recoup. Increasingly other nations are phasing out their reliance on fossil fuels shrinking the market for Australian coal. The continuing low price of coal places further pressure on profitability.

Government subsidies to the fossil fuel industry are generous. Diesel fuel rebates and accelerated depreciation on exploration and assets will cost the public \$14 billion over the next four years. Some estimates go much further than that. Australia's post-tax subsidies for petroleum products, natural gas and coal amounted to 1.79 per cent of gross domestic product in 2011, or about \$20 billion. In March 2013 the International Monetary Fund urged nations to stop subsidising fossil fuel energy.

Such generous treatment of a highly damaging industry makes no economic sense. We would urge that kind of investment into building a renewable energy industry. Currently around 6,000 people work in NSW mines and power stations. The University of Technology Sydney estimates there are up to 74,000 potential jobs in clean energy in NSW alone. Transitioning away from an archaic, polluting, and costly industry to one that is clean, economically viable with thousands of regional job potential is prudent policy. Further investment in coal energy infrastructure is not.

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