Sick of coal

Community attitudes toward the proposed fourth coal-loading terminal in Newcastle

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This report was prepared by Annika Dean and Dr James Whelan on behalf of the Coal Terminal Action Group. CTAG gratefully acknowledge the advice and assistance of Dr John Mackenzie and Dr Nick Higginbotham.

The Coal Terminal Action Group (CTAG) is an alliance of Newcastle and Hunter Valley community groups including: Hunter Community Environment Centre; Correct Planning and Consultation for Mayfield Group; Tighes Hill Community Group; The Wilderness Society Newcastle Branch; the National Parks Association Hunter Branch; Rising Tide Newcastle; Stockton Community Action Group, the Hunter Communities Network; Hunter Environment Lobby; the Parks and Playground Movement and Climate Action Newcastle.

For further details: 167 Parry Street, Hamilton East, Newcastle NSW 2302







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1. Main points

A fourth coal-loading terminal is proposed for Newcastle. This terminal (T4) would double the volume of coal transported through Newcastle. On June 3rd, 55 community members door-knocked almost 500 households in Newcastle suburbs to learn about attitudes toward this proposed terminal. Online surveys were also conducted, bringing the total number of survey respondents to 580. The survey results clearly show that:

- 77% of residents, including some residents who work in the industry, do not want any more coal loaders in Newcastle. Fewer than 10% of residents want more coal loaders.
- Of the 19% of respondents who feel that the expansion of the coal industry is "good" for the community, 70% are opposed to the proposed fourth coal terminal.
- 81% are aware that a fourth coal terminal is proposed, but few people know much detail about it beyond being aware of the general location.
- 74% of Newcastle residents are either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about the proposed fourth coal terminal.
- Dust, health and pollution are people's top concerns with dust mentioned more than twice as frequently as any other issue. Noise and traffic are the second and third most frequently mentioned concerns.
- 68% of residents feel "very" or "somewhat" affected by the three existing coal terminals.
- 69% of residents voiced concern about the impact of coal trains passing through Newcastle suburbs; 25% of respondents were not concerned.
- 39% report that they or a member of their household suffers from a respiratory ailment and one-third of these people consider that the ailment is caused by coal.
- 46% feel that the expansion of the coal industry is "bad" for the community, 19% feel it is "good" and 9% think it is both "good and bad".

Newcastle community groups are calling on NSW Planning Minister Brad Hazzard to suspend the planning process for the fourth coal terminal.

2. Introduction

A fourth coal terminal (T4) has been proposed for the port of Newcastle, NSW. Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS), which is owned by some of the major mining companies in the Hunter Valley (see Table 1), is the proponent of the project.

Table 1: Ownership of Port Waratah Coal Service (PWCS)

Company	Ownership (%)
Newcastle Coal Shippers (Xstrata, Rio Tinto, Anglo Coal and PWCS)	37
Coal & Allied (Rio Tinto)	30
Japanese Importers	30
Bloomfield Collieries	3

T4 would be comprised of 5 coal loading berths, 3 of which would be located on Kooragang Island and 2 of which would be located in Mayfield. A conveyer belt would be constructed across the south-arm of the Hunter River, to convey coal from the stockpiles on Kooragang to the berths in Mayfield. The location of the T4 project is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Location of the proposed fourth coal-loading terminal (T4)

If built, T4 would export 120 mega tonnes of coal per annum, which would nearly **double the current coal-exporting capacity of Newcastle port** (see Figure 2). When burned, this coal would emit **293 million tonnes of carbon dioxide pollution** into the atmosphere every year (55% of Australia's CO2 emissions), contributing to dangerous climate change.





Significant opposition to the T4 proposal has arisen from communities in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley due to the many detrimental impacts the project would have on health and the local, regional and global environment. The *Newcastle Herald* has outlined some of the negative impacts associated with the proposal over recent months (See Figure 3). Many more concerns about the T4 proposal were raised in over 500 submissions made to the Department of Planning by community groups and individuals objecting to the proposal.

Negative impacts of the T4 proposal include, but are not limited to:

Increased coal dust and diesel particulates from an estimated additional 107 coal train pass-bys per day from T4 alone.¹ This coal dust would increase respiratory ailments for communities living in the surrounding suburbs and along the rail line. Long-term exposure to particle pollution is directly linked to adverse health outcomes including increases in hospital admissions and emergency department attendance, respiratory disease, asthma, heart disease, congestive heart failure and mortality (Castleden, Shearman, Crisp, & Finch, 2011; Lockwood, Welker-Hood, Rauch, &

¹ Based on each train carrying a maximum of 6,100 tonnes of coal (Environ, 2012, p 192), residents living in proximity to the rail corridor can expect an additional 39,344 train pass-bys per year (107 per day) from T4 alone. If the total port expansion is included (331mtpa by 2022) then residents can expect 296 train pass-bys per day (one train every 4.86 minutes in a 24 hour period).

Gottlieb, 2009). Short-term exposures to particulates, even over a few hours, can trigger cardiovascular disease-related mortality and nonfatal events including myocardial infarction, heart failure, arrhythmias, strokes and adverse respiratory events (American Heart Association, 2010).

- The destruction of wetlands of international significance, which are critical roosting and foraging habitat for a number of threatened migratory shorebirds, including the Australasian Bittern.
- The risk of mobilising toxic contaminants from the project site into the Hunter Estuary.
- The construction of the equivalent of 15 more mega mines in the Hunter Valley and Liverpool Plains to feed the new coal loader. These would further pollute waterways, displace communities and destroy fertile farmland in the region, jeopardising food security.
- The development of the equivalent of 15 new large power stations internationally, which would release roughly 293 million tonnes of carbon dioxide pollution into the atmosphere, fuelling dangerous global warming.

Motivated by concerns about this proposal, 14 community groups in the Newcastle area decided to work together to stop this detrimental development. We were concerned that communities had not been given adequate opportunities to be informed and voice their concerns about this proposal. We decided to conduct a community survey in suburbs that would most acutely feel the effects of the proposed T4 development. This report summarises both the process and results of 580 conversations that we had with Newcastle residents to learn about their attitudes toward the proposed fourth coal terminal.



3. About the survey

This community survey was initiated by the *Coal Terminal Action Group* to learn how Newcastle community members view the proposed coal-loading terminal. We wanted to know if people were aware that the terminal had been proposed and was being assessed; how they felt about the current level of coal transportation and handling in Newcastle; their health concerns; and their views toward the coal industry and its place in our community. The majority of surveys (401) were conducted in the focus suburbs illustrated in Figure 4 below. The remaining surveys were spread across the suburbs of Carrington, Coal Point, Cooks Hill, East Maitland, Fern Bay, Fullerton Cove, Glendale, Hamilton, Highfields, Kotara, Lambton, Merewether, North Lambton, Newcastle East, The Hill, Tingara Heights and Waratah. Because the number of surveys conducted in each of these respective suburbs was relatively small, these were excluded from the mapping.



Figure 4: Focus suburbs where surveys were conducted (N=401)

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was developed with input from social scientists. It includes 18 questions: 12 'closed' questions with yes/no or other multiple choice options, and 6 open questions that invited respondents to share their views in a less structured way.

Fifty-five community members administered the survey on Sunday June 3rd 2012 between 10am and 12.30pm (see Figure 7). During this time, we door-knocked 483 households and selected one person who was home to complete the interview. The survey coordinators targeted suburbs that were closest to existing coal infrastructure and the proposed

location of T4. The volunteers conducting the survey knocked on each door. Surveys were completed at approximately two-thirds of the households where there were people at home. Approximately one-third of the householders we approached declined to respond to the survey.

Volunteers participating in the survey received a briefing and training workshop beforehand and debriefed together afterwards. The survey was also administered online through the 'Survey Monkey' platform. During the fortnight of June 3rd, 97 people completed the questionnaire online. In total, 580 people responded to the questionnaire. The respondents were approximately half male and half female (see Figure 6 below). The age distribution of survey respondents is shown in Figure 5.





Figure 6: Gender of survey respondents (N=580)



Survey results were analysed by PhD researcher Annika Dean and social scientists Dr James Whelan and Dr John Mackenzie. This report presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data.

Figure 7: Fifty-five community members preparing to door-knock Newcastle suburbs





4. Results

Are you aware that a fourth coal terminal is proposed for Newcastle harbour?

The survey results indicate that 82% of respondents are aware that a fourth coal terminal is proposed in Newcastle (see Figure 8). However, most people know very little about the details of the proposed terminal, beyond a general awareness of its proposed location.



Figure 8: Are you aware that a fourth coal terminal is proposed for Newcastle harbour? (N=580)

Community awareness is highest in Mayfield where more than 90% of residents are aware of the proposal. Awareness is also high in Tighes Hill and Stockton, while Mayfield West showed the lowest level of awareness (see Figure 9).



Are you concerned that the proposed terminal will negatively affect you?

Three-quarters of survey respondents (75%) indicated that they are either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about the proposed fourth coal terminal. Only 22% of respondents indicated that they are not at all concerned (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: Are you concerned that the proposed terminal will negatively affect you? (N=580)

Residents report higher levels of concern in Islington, Mayfield, Tighes Hill and Stockton. Lower levels of concern (relative to surrounding suburbs) are registered in Warabrook, Mayfield East, Carrington, Maryville and Mayfield West.



Do you already feel affected by the three current coal terminals?

The majority of respondents (67%) indicated that they feel either "very" or "somewhat" impacted by the three current coal terminals. Only 29% of respondents indicated that they do not feel affected by the current coal terminals (see Figure 12).





Do you want any more coal loaders in Newcastle?

An overwhelming three-quarters of respondents (77%) stated that they do not want another coal terminal in Newcastle. A clear majority (70%) of people who said that the expansion of the coal industry is good for the community still stated that they **do not** want another coal terminal in Newcastle. This is illustrated in Figure 13 below.



Figure 13: Do you want any more coal loaders in Newcastle? (N=580)

Figure 14 lists the main concerns respondents gave in reply to the open-ended questions. In interpreting these results, it is worth considering that some concerns are closely related and could be considered together rather than separately:

- Dust, pollution and health are closely related.
- 'Pollution' may be referring to particle pollution for coal dust or carbon dioxide pollution of coal when burned.
- Traffic, trains, noise and vibrations (from trains) are closely related.
- Concerns about destruction of wetlands, birds and the environment could all refer to local environmental impacts, but concerns about 'environment' may also relate to the impacts of increased mining, or the impacts of climate change.

Concern about the 'future' could be related to any number of other categories, such as destruction of the environment or exacerbation of climate change.

Figure 14: Community concerns ranked in order of frequency (number of times mentioned)



N.B.: Some respondents listed more than one concern.

Dust, pollution and health

Residents' most frequently mentioned concerns related to the health impacts of coal dust. The link between coal dust, respiratory illnesses and the links between cancer and exposure to coal dust are the focus of these health concerns. Respondents also expressed frustrations about coal dust settling on washing and having to "constantly wipe down surfaces."

Community concerns about coal dust are well founded. By 2022, when Newcastle coal port capacity is predicted to reach 330Mtpa, an estimated 37 tonnes of coal dust would be deposited along every kilometer of rail track per year (Kelly, 2012). Studies that outline the negative impacts of coal dust on human health are too numerous to discuss in this report. The report '*Coal's assault on human health'* (Lockwood et al., 2009) and a recently published article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* (Castleden et al., 2011) provide numerous references outlining the health impacts of coal dust.

Figure 15: Representative sample of residents' comments: dust, pollution and health



Residents were also asked whether they or a member of their household suffered from asthma or other respiratory illnesses. Forty-two percent indicated affirmative (see Figure 16). Of these 203 residents, 33% said that their respiratory illness was made worse by coal dust. The highest proportion of respondents with asthma or other respiratory ailments resides in Tighes Hill, followed by Mayfield and Stockton, as shown in Figure 17.



Figure 16: Do you or any members of your household suffer from asthma or respiratory illness? (N=580)





Traffic, trains and noise

Respondents frequently raised the issue of increased traffic, trains and noise. The survey results show that almost 70% of respondents are either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about coal trains passing through Newcastle (see Figure 18).





The key concerns of survey respondents in relation to trains are the frequency of coal trains, the dust fallout from uncovered wagons, the noise and vibrations from passing coal trains and the shunting of empty carriages.

One respondent commented that the walls of her daughter's house in Waratah are crumbling due to the vibrations from passing coal trains, as is the wall that they built as a sound barrier to mitigate the noise from coal trains. Another respondent related to us that she can not sleep due to the noise of the passing coal trains. She is trying to move house, but is finding it difficult because she is on the pension. These are just two of the anecdotes from the 324 times that concerns about noise were mentioned by survey respondents.

In relation to traffic, respondents expressed concern about the increased likelihood of accidents due to increased traffic on Cormorant road. Widespread annoyance was also expressed at coal trains holding up traffic and creating traffic-jams at level crossings.

There are many concerns throughout the community about the current level of coal trains. An additional 107 coal train pass-bys per day from T4 alone would be beyond the tolerance of the community. By 2020, when the port coal capacity reaches the planned 331 million tonnes, it will result in 108,000 coal train pass-bys per year for residents.

Figure 19: A representative sample of residents' comments about traffic, trains and noise



Figure 20: Coal trains at Carrington, Newcastle



Lifestyle and property value

Respondents mentioned reduced property value and lifestyle concerns 120 times. Concerns about property value were significantly less than concerns about the health impacts of coal dust and marginally less than concerns about climate change. Representative comments are presented in Figure 21 below.



Figure 21: A representative sample of residents' comments about lifestyle and property values

Climate change

The coal that will be exported via T4 will contribute **293 million tonnes of carbon dioxide pollution per year**. That is almost double the carbon dioxide equivalent emissions of the entire state of New South Wales (from all sources) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

The significant contribution of the fourth coal terminal to climate change was an issue raised by survey respondents. Concerns about climate change ranged from impacts of future sea level rise on the Newcastle LGA, to frustrations about locking Newcastle into a coal-dependent future when we should be looking towards cleaner sources of energy.

Climate Change, although a global phenomenon, will obviously have impacts on local environments and communities. By 2030 approximately 6,316 hectares of the Newcastle LGA could be impacted by climate change in the form of inundation from floods, storm surges and rising sea levels (DCCEE, 2011). Figure 22 below shows a representative sample of respondents' quotes about climate change.



Figure 22: A representative sample of residents' comments about climate change

Mining and regional impacts

Respondents expressed a range of concerns about the impact of coal mining on the Hunter Valley. The comments referred to environmental concerns such as habitat loss, impacts on the regional economy and other industries, and impacts on farmland.

Respondents were worried about how the coal industry is destroying existing industries in the Hunter Valley, such the wine industry, the thoroughbred industry and the tourism industry. Furthermore, the ugliness and the devastation of the Hunter Valley landscape were voiced as part of this issue (see Figure 24). Respondents also mentioned concerns about the planning process, in particular the lack of cumulative impact assessment. A number of respondents used very strong language to express their feelings about the expansion of mining in the Hunter Valley (see Figure 23).





Figure 24: An open-cut coalmine in the Hunter Valley



Local environmental impacts

Most respondents were unaware about the impacts that T4 would have on the Hunter wetlands. This is despite the fact that these wetlands are internationally recognized and are critical habitat for threatened species such as the Green and Golden Bell frog (*Litoria aurea*) and a number of migratory shorebirds including the Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*). A small number of respondents mentioned concerns about destruction of migratory shorebird habitat and cited concerns about the potential mobilisation of toxic contaminants into the adjacent Hunter Estuary; however this was a minority of survey respondents. A greater number of respondents cited abstract concerns about impacts on "the environment" more generally.

Figure 25: Pelicans at Swan Pond, Ash Island (proposed site of the fourth coal terminal)



Figure 26: Black swans at Swan Pond, Ash Island



Community attitudes toward the expansion of the coal industry

As illustrated in Figure 27 below, almost half of all respondents (46%) feel that the expansion of the coal industry is "bad" for the community. Almost 20% of respondents feel it is "good" for the community and almost 10% believe it is both "good" and "bad".

Figure 27: Do you feel the expansion of the coal industry in the Hunter is bad for the local community, good for the local community or don't know? (N=580)



It's good for the economy but ...

Many respondents who commented that the expansion of the coal industry is "good" for the community did not speak positively about the industry overall. They described it as "a sacrifice that has to be made for the economy at the expense of community and environmental health." This sentiment is reflected in the following selection of quotes from respondents:

- "It's a catch 22 a lot of people depend on it for a living."
- "It's good for the economy but bad for health."
- "It's good for the economy but the coal boom won't last."
- "It's good for the economy, but bad for people."
- "It's devastating the land, but it's good for the economy."
- "It's good for some, but not for the community as a whole."
- "Economically it's good but useless without good health."
- "Sure it brings money in, but the benefits may not override the negatives."
- "The economy needs to be stimulated, but at what cost should this come?"

Newcastle's Identity as a coal town

Reasons cited in favour of the coal industry invariably revolved around the economic contribution of the coal industry and employment opportunities. Newcastle's identity as a coal town was used in the context of arguments both for and against the industry, as illustrated in the following quotes:

- "If it wasn't for coal, Newcastle wouldn't be here, but I don't like it."
- "Being the biggest coal port in the world is something that draws people to Newcastle. But coal shouldn't take over the city. We were glad to get rid of BHP and it would be good if we could become a services economy."
- "Newcastle is founded on coal."

The wealth isn't shared

Although many respondents spoke of the positive contribution of the coal industry to the economy, at least as many respondents spoke of negative economic impacts. For example, a widely held sentiment was expressed that the coal industry is increasing economic inequality and that residents of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley are not benefitting from the coal boom - despite these places bearing the costs. This sentiment is expressed in the selection of quotes from respondents below:

- "We don't get anything out of it."
- "Locals don't see any benefits."
- "It's not good for mining regions."
- "Coal dust is bad, money doesn't' stay here."
- "It's good and bad. It brings in money, but Newcastle doesn't see the money."
- "It's good, but none of the revenue is for Newcastle."
- "The money doesn't stay here. It's not good for Newcastle."
- "There are not enough royalties that come back to Newcastle they go to Sydney instead."
- "Only a small percent get wealthy at the expense of others."

Several respondents also noted that "Coal interests are owned by overseas" and that "the money is going overseas and our land is becoming foreign-owned."

Economic Diversification

Several respondents spoke about the coal industry preventing the economic diversification of Newcastle and sustaining our reliance on coal. Respondents repeatedly voiced the sentiment that: "It's not good for Newcastle's economic future to depend on just one industry" and "we need more economic diversity."

The issue of the coal industry preventing economic diversification is related to concerns about the coal industry directly competing against other industries in the Hunter Valley, such as the viticulture industry, the multi-billion dollar thoroughbred industry, agriculture and the tourism industry. These concerns are displayed in the selection of quotes below:

- "It's killing the farms."
- "The coal lobby is winning over the wine industry."
- "It's good, but it's not going to last forever. I'm worried about the food basin, the thoroughbred industry will these industries recover once the coal boom is over? We need more diversity."

Finally, the sentiment was expressed that, whilst benefitting some in the short term, the coal industry is not sustainable in the long-term and is a shortsighted venture. As one respondent whose family has personally benefitted from the coal industry explained:

The economic imperatives have been the overriding factor and that is not good for the community. My family has personally benefited - but it's not good for the community as a whole. It's tricky to balance the short-term benefits against the long-term costs.

Figure 28: Representative comments on residents' concerns: economy and employment

"We need sustainable rather than boom-bust industries." "We need to find alternatives to coal exports. We need to build a better future for Newcastle and the Hunter"

"Newcastle needs to establish itself as a thriving city, independent of this filthy industry"

"There must be other ways of making money!"

Economy & employment

"It's a polluting, unsustainable industry that is bad for us, bad for the land and bad for our economy! Coal is finite!"

> "Enough already. We need to diversify and move to renewables."

"We are investing in a dead industry that will dominate our town and benefit very few people. "I would prefer Newcastle to be looking to the future and beginning new enterprises that don't depend on resources that will soon be depleted"

"It keeps Newcastle in an old mentality, full of filthy industry. There is a an extreme lack of investment from mining in the community."

5. Recommendations and conclusion

The overarching theme that emerged from analysing the results of this survey is that the majority of Newcastle residents are "sick of coal".

The rapid expansion of the coal industry in the Hunter Valley has resulted in a corresponding increase of negative side effects, locally, regionally and globally. These include increases in health impacts from particle pollution, increased coal train movements, increased mining and a host of other impacts. Coal expansion is contributing to increased inequality, as the wealth of the profits is not shared. It is also directly compromising other industries in the Hunter Valley (such as farming, viticulture, the thoroughbred industry and the tourism industry) and indirectly preventing the economic diversification of Newcastle Coal Port.

In short, the costs of the coal industry are perceived as very high and the benefits are very few and Newcastle residents have had enough.

Based on these findings, the *Coal Terminal Action Group* recommends that:

- A comprehensive and independent study be funded to investigate the health impacts of particle pollution, especially fine and ultrafine particles, along the rail corridor and around the port sources of pollution.
- A thorough and comprehensive economic cost-benefit analysis of the coal industry be conducted to investigate the impacts that coal expansion is having on other industries (both locally and nationally). The health costs of coal should also be investigated, as should the opportunity cost from preventing the economic diversification of the Newcastle port.
- A levy be placed on coal exports to fund the diversification of the port and a transition away from coal in the Hunter Valley.

Most urgently, we call on a suspension of the planning process of the fourth coal terminal, until the studies recommended above have been completed and the concerns outlined in this report have been thoroughly addressed.

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7. Appendix: Survey questionnaire

Name of person conducting this survey:

Street and Suburb of this Survey:

Port Waratah Coal Services have proposed a new 120 million ton per year coal terminal - called T4. The proposal would see a large increase in coal exports from Newcastle. This short survey by community groups is about your experience of the existing coal loaders as well as the proposed 4th terminal.

1	Are you aware	e that a 4th coal terminal is proposed for Newcastle Harbour?	🛛 Yes 🗆 No
2	What do		
	you know?		
3	Are you conce	rned that the proposed terminal will negatively affect you?	□ Yes very
			□ Yes somewhat
			🗆 No
4	If yes - In Eg. health, lifestyle, property value, dust, traffic		
	what way? If no, Why		
	won't it		
	affect you?		
5		y feel affected by the 3 current coal terminals?	□ Yes very
	- ,	, ,	□ Yes somewhat
			🗆 No
6	If yes In	Eg: noise, dust, pollution, traffic	
	what ways?		1
7	Are you conce	rned about the coal trains passing through Newcastle's suburbs?	□ Yes very
			□ Yes somewhat
			□ No
8	If yes, what	Eg: noise, dust pollution, vibration	
	concerns you?		
9			□ Yes □ No
respiratory illnesses?			
10		feel these illnesses are made worse by the nearby coal terminals	□ Yes □ No
or coal trains?			
11 Do you feel the expansion of the coal industry in the Hunter is bad for the loca		🗖 Bad	
	community, good for the local community or don't know		□ Good
			Don't know
12			🛛 Yes 🗆 No
13	Why?		
14	We'll be taking these results to the relevant politicians who will be making decisions around the		
	new coal loader. What message would you like us to send to them?		
		□ Yes □ No	
16 Then would you like to join our mailing list? If YES, record name, address, email and			
17	Finally, your age category: □18-24 □ 25-34 □ 35-44 □45-54 □55-64 □65+ □ male □ female		

