



# Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

PO Box 188  
East Maitland NSW 2323  
18<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
NSW Government

## **Hunter Environment Lobby Inc - Objection**

### **Introduction**

Hunter Environment Lobby inc (HEL) is a regional community-based environmental organization that has been active for over 25 years on the issues of environmental degradation, species and habitat loss, and climate change.

We cannot support the ongoing incremental creep of fossil fuel expansion or exploitation of fossil fuel related industries in the Hunter Region. The regional cumulative environmental impacts of very large extractive operations like open cut coal mines taken together with the addition of this proposed fossil fuel powered plant are unsustainable and are not adequately assessed or recognised as an expensive legacy for future generations.

Our particular concern is the cumulative impacts of fossil fuel powered plants, taken with their particulate emissions which affect community health as well as adding to Green House Emissions which in turn powers climate change.

### **Major Project SSI-9837 - Newcastle Power Station**

HEL submits that this project should not proceed at all because increasing power needs to be renewable, not fossil fuel driven. We do also note by declaring it 'Critical' State Significant Infrastructure (SSI), the Government has effectively pre-determined that the project is 'essential' and should proceed notwithstanding any objections. Faced with this likely reality, we also make submissions for conditions to be placed on any approval.

### **Objection to the Project**

We submit that in light of an overwhelming international scientific consensus on climate change, and the need to urgently cut emissions of greenhouse gases, it is irresponsible for the State Government to be even considering approving any new fossil fuel burning power stations.

HEL feels that a new fossil fuel powered plant is unnecessary as renewable energy sources, supported by storage technologies and grid improvements, can more than

satisfy the electricity needs of the State as existing fossil fuel power stations come to the end of their life and are phased out.

Current levels of reliance on gas power in NSW must be reduced for Australia to play its part in limiting global warming below a 2°C increase on pre-industrial levels (the barest necessary ambition).

With sufficient political will, NSW can achieve a 'just transition' from a fossil fuel economy, providing alternative employment for coal and gas industry workers, a better future for their communities and clean, reliable and affordable power into the future.

The proposal is for a 250 megawatt dual-fired power station operating on gas and/or diesel, designed to allow for continuous as well as peaking operation. Both natural gas and diesel are fossil fuels and burning them generates Co2 emissions.

In addition, the entire supply chain of gas production is even more harmful. The drilling and extraction of natural gas from wells and its transportation in pipelines leads to methane leakage, and methane is 86 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.

The proposed power plant itself will be significantly polluting – the EIS estimates greenhouse gas emissions amounting to up to 220,000 tonnes per year if only used as a peaking plant. This is the equivalent of adding 70,000 petrol fueled cars to the roads. If the plant is run continuously, annual emissions could be seven times greater, contributing up to 5.8 million tonnes per year, or the equivalent of more than 500,000 cars! This is clearly unacceptable and inconsistent with the State Government's declared emission reduction target (which is itself inadequate and will need to be increased).

### **Suggested Conditions that should apply to any approval**

By declaring the project 'critical' SSI, the government appears to have already decided that it will approve it as 'essential'. If this is the case, then at the very least, consideration should be given to the following points:

- Limiting operation to peaking or firming demand would result in far fewer harmful GHG emissions – AGL should be prevented or discouraged from continuous operations which may be more commercially attractive, but far more harmful.
- Gas operation will generate marginally less emissions than diesel. Why is it necessary to include a diesel option? Can conditions be placed on any approval to limit the circumstances in which diesel is used – e.g. not just because it is cheaper, but only in critical power shortage scenarios?
- How does the proposed project operation relate to
  - (a) the existing AGL Gas storage facility?
  - (b) the proposed gas import terminal at Kooragang Island?
  - (c) the proposed Qld/Hunter Gas pipeline?

A full assessment of the Power Station proposal needs to take into account the overall impact of all gas related infrastructure projects in the region.

- The impact on air quality in the immediate area is clearly a matter of significant concern. Any approval should be conditioned to minimise adverse effects.

Yours in trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Davis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jan Davis  
President Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.