

2021-06-02

Re: Objection to Kurri Kurri Gas Plant

Hello,

My name is Peter Horsley, I'm a resident of Wahroonga, Sydney, and am writing this submission to express my strong objection to the proposed Kurri Kurri Gas Plant in the Hunter Valley. As a parent of three young kids, I hold grave concerns about the impact of climate change on future generations. So after researching the facts, we installed solar and batteries, disconnected our gas supply, sold our gas cars and bought electric vehicles. Clean air, renewable electricity and most importantly, reduced atmospheric carbon emissions should be the highest priority for Australia right now. We frequently travel to the Hunter Valley where we have seen the gaping open-cut coal mine pits, breathed the poor quality air, and are concerned for the communities where the health hazard of living near coal and gas power plants is a reality, and it makes me sad. Australia can do better, and say no to fossil fuels and yes to renewables. This particular project to which I am objecting has so many flaws it is quite unbelievable that it was even proposed. I will list a few:

1. NSW has a 2050 Net Zero commitment - this plant is not aligned to that commitment, as it will release 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. Just last month, the International Energy Agency stated very clearly that we need no new investments in oil, gas or coal projects in order to reach Net Zero by 2050.
2. The gas plant will make the poor air quality in the Hunter Valley even worse, releasing large amounts of nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide, which have multiple serious health consequences for anyone breathing the air. The proposed site is only around 2km from the local town in which families with young children live.
3. The AEMO (Australian Energy Market Operator) has stated that the shortfall in electricity generation from the planned closure of the Lidell coal plant in 2023 is far less than claimed by the government (and used as a justification for proposing this project). The government (Scott Morrison) claimed on Tuesday 15 September 2020, that an estimated 1,000 megawatts of new capacity would be required, however AEMO has said it is actually only 154 megawatts, and that there is well in excess of that amount of new power capacity already announced that will be joining the grid before 2023.
4. The proposed site near Kurri Kurri currently has no gas connection, and the proposed gas pipeline from QLD to NSW has been held up in planning stages for the past 10 years, due to the extreme logistical complexity of running a pipeline for such a long distance through so many properties. So initially, the new gas plant would have no gas to run on, and instead be run on heavily polluting diesel, contributing further to air quality issues in the Hunter and the environment in general.
5. The economics of this taxpayer funded project don't make sense, gas is more expensive than both wind and solar, so, as Kerry Schott (the Chair of the Australian Energy Security Board) said, "Nobody is going to build it from the private sector

because it doesn't stack up. Because it's expensive power, it's hard to see it makes commercial sense." I would not want my hard-earned taxes being used for projects that do not make commercial sense, and I'm pretty sure the majority of taxpayers in this country would agree.

6. Last week, in *Sharma v Minister for Environment*, the Federal Court of Australia ruled that the Federal Environment Minister (Sussan Ley) has a duty of care to protect young people from foreseeable future climate change harms. Ms Ley in her role therefore is required by law to acknowledge that building a new gas plant would indeed constitute an action that increases the risk of harm from climate change for young people, and therefore, should not approve of it.

Reflecting on Australia's COVID-19 response, our government demonstrated that it can indeed listen to and heed the advice of our scientists and medical experts, thankfully. However, it seems when it comes to climate change, our government has instead decided to ignore the advice of scientists and energy experts, who have been consistently and unanimously calling for decades now for a rapid transition away from fossil fuels for electricity generation as the most important step in reducing the impact of extreme climate events in the future. The months-long megafires in 2019/2020 and subsequent record-breaking flooding were appalling events to all Australians, well beyond our control, and demonstrate the future we are heading towards, unless we take action now to save ourselves. Building a new fossil fuel electricity plant will only make such events more frequent and more intense, and will be placing the lives of our children in danger.

Please note my objection to this project for the above reasons.

Thank-you

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