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**Submission on the proposed Hunter Power Project (Kurri Kurri Power Station).
Application number SSI-12590060**

Dear Sir/Madam

Climate Action Newcastle is a not-for-profit and non-aligned community group working to educate and empower the community to take action on climate change. We develop and promote climate change solutions to households, government and industry. Our members are committed local residents from all backgrounds.

Climate Action Newcastle oppose the proposed Hunter Power Project. The Project should not be approved by the New South Wales Government.

The NSW Government has committed to a strategy to transition rapidly to renewable energy generation and storage, effectively reducing Greenhouse gas emissions and creating secure and sustainable jobs. This commitment is clearly articulated in the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap enacted into law on 2 December 2020.[1]

Contrary to the claim made in the EIS (on page 58), the proposed Power Station is inconsistent with this NSW Government policy.

The Berejiklian government has pledged to support 12 gigawatts of wind and solar and 2 gigawatts of energy storage and to establish five Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) in the Central West Orana, Illawarra, New England, South West and Hunter-Central Coast regions. These Zones will deliver an intended network capacity of 12 gigawatts.

Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) are modern-day power stations. They combine renewable energy generation such as wind and solar, storage such as batteries, and high-voltage poles and wires to deliver energy to the homes, businesses and industries that need it.

The Roadmap aims to help NSW deliver on its ambitions to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and to reduce NSW electricity emissions by 90 million tonnes by 2030.

The NSW Government's commitment to a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is also clearly articulated in the Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030 Plan, which aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 by creating new jobs, cutting household costs and attracting investment. [2]

These policies have been welcomed by community stakeholders. [3]

Climate Action Newcastle welcomes the NSW Government commitment to, “lower the cost of electricity, create jobs in regional areas and avoid the state having to rush to build new generation as ageing coal plants closed in the years ahead”. [4]

The proposed Hunter Power Project is incompatible with the commitment made by NSW Energy and Environment Minister Matt Kean for NSW to become a “renewable energy superpower”. The Roadmap clearly differentiates the NSW Government’s approach to energy from the Commonwealth’s reliance on a “gas-led recovery”. It could see renewable energy increase from 16% of energy generated in NSW to more than 60%.

Climate Action Newcastle advocates meeting energy demand through a combination of renewable energy and battery storage. The EIS acknowledges that a combination of grid-scale batteries and fast-start-turbines could provide dispatchable capacity and meet demands when the needs of electricity consumers are highest (p.x). Further, the EIS states that “the cost of batteries is falling, making storage an increasingly commercially viable option” (p.52).

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The NSW Government has committed to reducing GHG emissions. Fuelled by diesel and gas, would emit 500,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year for 30 years. As such, the project is inconsistent with NSW Government policy objectives.

Air pollution

The Hunter Valley is one of Australia’s most polluted airsheds. The extensive ambient air pollution monitoring network operated by the NSW Government records frequent exceedances of the national air quality (NEPM) standards. During 2019, health standards for particle pollution were breached more 1,000 times.[5] Evidence of air pollution exceedances and trends has been presented to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on many occasions, as the Planning Commission has considered other major projects.

The health burden of air pollution on Hunter Valley communities was estimated to be approximately \$600M per annum in 2015 [6]. A power plant fuelled by gas and diesel would worsen these impacts.

It is indicative of the very poor (and at times misleading) quality of the Project EIS that the consultants describe the Hunter Valley airshed as “suitable to receive emissions from a power station” (on page 83).

Sincerely



James Whelan
Committee member, Climate Action Newcastle

References

- [1] NSW Government Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap
<https://energy.nsw.gov.au/government-and-regulation/electricity-infrastructure-roadmap>
- [2] NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030 Plan
the objective is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 by creating new jobs, cutting household costs and attracting investment.
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Climate-change/net-zero-plan-2020-2030-200057.pdf>
- [3] 10/22/20 'NSW Government releases ambitious renewable energy roadmap', *Sustainability Matters*,
<https://www.sustainabilitymatters.net.au/content/sustainability/article/nsw-government-releases-ambitious-renewable-energy-roadmap-568667956>
- [4] 10/11/20 'NSW promises to build more renewable energy than Victoria and Queensland combined', *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/nov/10/nsw-promises-to-build-more-renewable-energy-than-victoria-and-queensland-combined>
- [5] 8/4/21 'Malcolm Turnbull accuses John Barilaro of 'gaslighting' with claim air quality data is manipulated', *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/08/malcolm-turnbull-accuses-john-barilaro-of-gaslighting-with-claim-air-quality-data-is-manipulated>
- [6] Climate and Health Alliance, 2015, Coal and Health in the Hunter: Lessons from one valley for the world'
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/caha/legacy_url/53/Climate-and-Health-Alliance_Report_Layout_PRINTv2.pdf?1439938112