

Kurri Kurri Gas Power Plant Submission

I am strongly opposed to the Kurri Kurri gas power plant project due to the likely impacts on air quality and the health of local residents, as well as the potential impacts on the environment. I live in Heddon Greta, just 3km from the proposed gas power plant.

My husband and I moved to Heddon Greta 2 years ago. While we love the area, since we have moved here, my asthma and sinus has significantly increased, impacting my work and quality of life. We also have an elderly neighbour who suffers from asthma. I am very concerned about the impact that the proposed power plant will have on my health and that of my neighbours.

According to the Environmental Impact Statement, the power plant is expected to generate NO_x, CO, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and SO₂. Research has shown that NO_x and SO₂ “aggravate asthma and respiratory conditions”¹. This could have serious impacts for myself and particularly my neighbour, possibly leading to complications, hospitalisations and making us more vulnerable to other illnesses with a respiratory component, including COVID-19 and influenza.

The Environmental Impact Statement estimated the amount of pollutants likely to be generated while the plant is in operation and stated that these levels are unlikely to present a significant risk. However, a study in California found that during start-up, NO_x emissions from gas power plants can be significantly higher than during normal operation². This must be considered, and included in the modelling, to gain a complete understanding of the likely impact to local air quality and the health of local residents.

Has a study been done into the supposed return on investment for this power plant in comparison to the likely public health costs of increased respiratory illnesses within the local area?

The International Energy Agency recently stated there should be no new investments in fossil fuels if global net zero goals were to be achieved. In addition, the goal of the NSW Government’s Net Zero Plan is to reach zero net emissions by 2050, with a reduction in emissions by 35% by 2030³. This proposed power plant will make this goal harder to reach.

Dr Dylan McConnell (an energy systems research fellow at the University of Melbourne Climate & Energy College) stated that the Kurri Kurri gas plant was unnecessary, particularly following Energy Australia’s announcement that it will build a 316MW gas-fired power plant south of Wollongong⁴. There have also been a range of large battery projects announced in recent years, which will no doubt help to make up any shortfall experienced following the closure of Liddell Power Station.

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and the head of the Energy Security Board similarly do not support the plan to build a gas power plant⁵. Recently, gas-fired power output has plunged due to rising natural gas prices, lower power demand and competition from renewable energy⁶.

I do not believe that there is sufficient need to build this power plant and would hate to see such a huge amount of public money spent on this project if it is not required, particularly given the potential for health and environmental impacts. I ask that you refer this proposal to the NSW Independent Planning Commission so that it may be investigated more closely.

¹ Fouladi-Fard, Reza & Naddafi, Kazem & Yunesian, Masoud & Nabizadeh, Ramin & Dehghani, Mohammad Hadi & Hassanvand, Mohammad sadegh. (2016). The assessment of health impacts and external costs of natural gas-fired power plant of Qom. Environmental Science and Pollution Research. 23. 10.1007/s11356-016-7258-0.

² California ISO. 2016. Senate Bill 350 Study. Volume IX: Environmental Study. p. 100 ([SB350Study-Volume9EnvironmentalStudy.pdf \(caiso.com\)](#))

³ NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. (2020). Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030. ([Net Zero Plan. Stage 1: 2020-2030 \(nsw.gov.au\)](#))

⁴ O’Malley, Nick & Hannam, Peter. (19 May 2021). Morrison government bankrolls \$600m Hunter Valley gas plant. The Sydney Morning Herald. ([Kurri Kurri power plant worth \\$600m bankrolled by Morrison government \(smh.com.au\)](#))

⁵ Brissenden, Michael, Donaldson, Amy & Day, Lauren. (12 April 2021). Government accused of pressuring experts who questioned its gas-fired recovery plan. ABC News. ([Government accused of pressuring experts who questioned its gas-fired recovery plan - ABC News](#))

⁶ Paul, Sonali. (27 April 2021). Australia’s natural gas-fired power output slumps to 16-year low. Nasdaq. ([Australia's natural gas-fired power output slumps to 16-year low | Nasdaq](#))