Hunter Community Environment Centre.

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Submission: Hunter Power Project (Kurri Kurri Power Station)

The Hunter Community Environment Centre is a not-for-profit environmental resource centre located in Newcastle, established in 2004 to support grassroots community efforts to protect and preserve the important ecological assets of the greater Hunter Valley.

Through environmental investigation, research and publications, skill-sharing and community engagement the HCEC seeks to facilitate input from grassroots constituents towards improved social and environmental outcomes on matters that impact biodiversity in the Newcastle and greater Hunter region.

The HCEC objects to the Hunter Power Project (Kurri Kurri Power Station) primarily due to its environmental and biodiversity impacts which appear to be disproportionate to the small overall footprint of the proposal, as well as on the grounds the project will emit potentially millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution over the course of its operational life, and may increase or facilitate a demand for gas extraction and associated pipelines and infrastructure, introducing an unwelcome suite of impacts to water, land, climate and communities across the Hunter region and directly affecting land-holders and biodiversity across the region.

The environmental impacts and implications of this project are likely to extend far beyond the localised yet concentrated impacts of the power stations footprint and infrequent operation.

1. **Adverse impacts to a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion and over six threatened fauna species**

   The proposed projects Biodiversity Assessment Appendix B, cites the clearing of habitat for over six separate threatened species, listed under the EPBC or the BC Act: including the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot, the Australasian Bittern, Koala, Grey headed flying-fox, Southern Mytosis. A range of other Threatened species and are also identified as likely to occur in the locality of the project.

   In addition the removal of 37 *Eucalyptus Parramattensis* trees which have very limited distribution overall, but concentrated in the Kurri Kurri region, an associated plant type community with the TEC, Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland.

   For a project with such a small overall physical foot-print, any impacts on threatened plant and animal species are unjustifiable, and the design and resulting project boundary must be revised to avoid the removal of threatened species habitat.

2. **Disturbance and clearing of habitat resulting in 'Serious and irreversible' impacts on two critically endangered bird species (Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater and the Swift Parrot) listed under both state and federal biodiversity Acts.**

   The proposed project area is situated within the centre of a substantial section of habitat area for two critically endangered bird species, with the proposed border set to encroach on Regent Honeyeater habitat.

   The removal of habitat, as well as noise, dust, vibration and pollution impacts in the construction and any operational phases of the plant are likely to result in further disturbance of the surrounding habitat area for these highly sensitive species

   Whether or not the impacts are intermittent, sporadic or considered to be insignificant in the proposal, the HCEC asserts that the proposal must be revaluated to amend the layout and footprint so as not to disturb or result in the clearing of any habitat that sustains or could sustain critically endangered species.

3. **Proximity and potential impacts to wetlands, fish habitat and a riparian corridor**

   Three sensitive receiving environments are identified, with potential to be impacted by pollution from the site. Two of the sensitive receiving environments contain mapped Key Fish Habitat. The proposed project is also located in close proximity to a riparian zone and a cluster of wetlands, and the biodiversity assessment lists up to 16 migratory birds listed that are likely to occur in proximity to the project.

   The project as proposed comes with a range of potential hazards, risks and cumulative impacts from spills, erosion and sedimentation to surface water discharges and run-off, highly likely to drive further degradation of surrounding habitat, with the potential to instead support endangered aquatic species and play a role in the wider aquatic ecosystem and waterways in the area.