

## HUNTER POWER PROJECT (Kurri Kurri Power Plant) Objection

I am objecting to the approval of the Hunter Power Project at Kurri Kurri NSW, which would see Snowy Hydro Limited, an Australian Government owned corporation, build an open cycle gas fired power station near Kurri Kurri, NSW. With a projected project life of 30 years, utilising diesel in the short-term, with diesel backup capacity in operation.

I object to this project myself, but mostly on behalf of my children and future generations, the current political, economic and planning processes do not adequately consider them.

The threat of global warming, driving climate change, is acknowledged at every level of government and across International agreements. As we rely on science to drive policy decisions, it has become clear that we need to act urgently to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels of all kinds and significantly limit the greenhouse gas emissions they generate. We must leave remaining stocks of fossil fuels in the ground and not seek to expand or prolong their use in any way.

Intergenerational justice demands that we have a responsibility to leave future generations a clean and healthy atmosphere and a living world in which they can survive and thrive. We are not currently meeting these obligations.

The recent judgment in the Federal Court in the Sharma vs Environment Minister case confirmed that the Environment Minister has a responsibility to take reasonable care to avoid actions that will cause children harm from climate change. The court further found that climate change could cause catastrophic and serious harm to younger people. Evidence was accepted by both the government's representatives and the court that children will be exposed to risks associated with the concerned project's effect of increased CO2 emissions. The same would be true for any project that will increase CO2 emissions (and equivalents).

The court ruling confirms the duty of care held by ministers to protect young people from climate change and its impacts by limiting emissions, down to net zero as quickly as possible, in line with the best scientific advice. As the mother of a seven and ten year old, I am deeply concerned that not nearly enough is being done to tackle climate change and its known consequences, failing in this duty of care.

*"The actions we take today with respect to climate change can consign our children, our children's children, and other future generations to a world that is fundamentally liveable or a world that is not,"*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/29/climate/fossil-fuel-courts-exxon-shell-chevron.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

While the Australian government has committed to the international Paris Climate Agreement, current adopted targets are not being met, and currently set targets are not sufficient to achieve the aims of the agreement, to limit warming to 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and as close to 1.5 degrees as possible. We are already at 1.1 degrees of global heating and we have very likely passed any opportunity to hold warming to 1.5 degrees, a level at which hundreds of millions of people will be adversely affected; many more again will be affected at 2 degrees.

United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) annual Emissions Gap Report confirms that even if all current unconditional commitments under the Paris Agreement are implemented, temperatures are expected to rise by 3.2°C above pre-industrial levels this century.

*"Despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions from the COVID-19 economic slowdown, the world is still heading for a catastrophic temperature rise above 3°C this century – far beyond the goals of the Paris Agreement"*

This lack of adequate commitment was reiterated by the recent International Energy Agency's report *Net Zero by 2050 A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*. The IEA stressed that 'As of this year' no new oil, gas and coal investments are needed if we want to reach our targets.

With every approval of new, or expanded, fossil fuel project, we compromise our commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and the NSW's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

From the Hunter Power Projects environmental impact statement, the operational phase of the project will produce estimated emissions of 500,299 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per annum.

I note that the NSW state government announced a policy in January 2021, with a \$4.7 million funding boost, aimed at tackling food and garden waste in NSW, to divert 200,000 tonnes of organics waste from landfill each year. The estimates of the annual emissions savings for this significant policy and investment would be an estimated 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

The Hunter Power Projects estimated emissions would effectively eliminate any savings NSW would make on its investment in diverting waste from landfill.

Every emission counts towards achieving net zero.

Expanding the use of gas for electricity is counter to the necessary aims of lowering emissions rapidly. At all stages of gas production and transportation, fossil gas is emissions intensive, leaking methane into the atmosphere. Fugitive methane emissions of just 3% across the gas production system wipes out any of the emissions benefit of burning fossil gas over coal for electricity. While gas does produce less CO2 than coal when burnt, this is not the full story.

Recent research has shown that methane in the atmosphere from fossil fuel sources has been underestimated by as much as 25-40%. Methane has 86 times the warming potential of CO2 over 20-years; the critical period we have to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many industry bodies and experts, including the chair of the Australian Energy Security Board Kerry Schott, have warned that the project will not have the effect of lowering electricity prices for consumers. Gas is an expensive form of energy generation, especially compared to renewables.

While the role of this plant is for "peak load" generation, there are existing underutilised facilities that could perform this function and there have been many more projects announced which are in the pipeline of development.

The fast adoption and rapidly declining cost of batteries will also better fulfil this function. The likely ongoing high cost of gas compared to other forms of energy generation and the declining cost of batteries would likely see the Hunter Power plant quickly become a stranded asset before the end of its useful life.

The primary proposed need for the building of the Hunter power plant is to fill a gap left from the scheduled closure of the Liddell Power Station in 2023.

Despite the federal government's claim that 1,000MW of additional dispatchable electricity would be needed on the closure of Liddell this was not the finding of the government appointed taskforce to investigate the impact of the closure. Instead, the taskforce confirmed "a range of energy committed and probable projects that it found would be "more than sufficient" to maintain a high level of power grid reliability as Liddell shut".

AEMO (last month) reported that only an additional 154MW would be needed in NSW by 2023 to meet the electricity grids strict "reliability standard", which has already been adequately met by new power capacity projects since announced.

From a jobs perspective, the EIS confirms, the project would create only 10 permanent full time equivalent jobs and would only operate for 2% of the time.

This is not a worthwhile investment of \$610 Million of taxpayer's funds.

The harm caused to children, from climate change into the future, by expanding fossil fuel projects is established. It is worth noting this includes increased natural disasters, food and water insecurity and the strong likelihood of mass human migration and displacement.

Climate change impacts are already being felt, confirmed by the findings of the royal commission into the 2019/2020 bushfire season.

Gas projects pose even more immediate risks to health for those who live nearby through worsening air-quality. The project environmental impact statement confirms the project would generate air pollutant emissions from the combustion of natural gas and diesel fuel.

Both gas and diesel generate emissions of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides, sulphuroxides, suspended particulate matter (such as PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and unburnt hydrocarbons and other volatile organic compounds. These pollutants contribute to lung disease and poor health, especially in older people and children.

Governments have a duty of care to future generations but also an obligation to listen to expert advice and scientific recommendation. The solutions are obvious, and primary among them is to stop extracting and burning fossil fuels.

We know what is at stake and the intergenerational inequity the approval of this, or any other fossil fuel project represents. There is no amount of conditional approval of a fossil fuel project that will make it environmentally sound or just in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. There is no amount of economic benefit in the short term that can justify compromising the safety of future humans.

I ask that this project be rejected.

Siobhain O'Leary  
Leumeah NSW  
9/6/21

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