



Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

202 High St
East Maitland NSW 2323
9th June 2021

Proposed Kurri Kurri Gas Power Plant - Object

Hunter Environment Lobby (HEL) is a regional community-based environmental organisation that has been active for well over twenty five years on the issues of environmental degradation, species and habitat loss, degradation of rivers, riparian zones, groundwater destruction and climate change.

As we know, we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, Australians have lived through a number of extreme weather events over the last two years, including the Black Summer bushfires, drought and intense heatwaves.

There has also been another mass bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef. Gas is a fossil fuel driving climate change. Burning coal, oil and gas drives climate change. We believe we must urgently phase out all fossil fuels, including gas, if we are to avoid dangerous climate change.

Every time we expand or build new fossil fuel infrastructure, including gas power stations, we are putting more Australian lives and livelihoods in danger. There is no need for a new gas power station at Kurri or anywhere else.

AEMO's Electricity Statement of Opportunities 2020 report, found that New South Wales was not expected to exceed the Reliability Standard at any point to 2028-29. On the stricter Interim Reliability Measure, a capacity shortfall of just 154MW is identified after the Liddell power station closes in 2023-24.

AEMO expects this small gap to be filled by "the New South Wales Government's commitment to provide capital projects funding to 170 MW of dispatchable capacity under its Emerging Energy Program".

Burning gas is a very expensive way to provide electricity. Australia's experts, including AEMO, don't foresee an increased role for gas on a pathway to a lower cost electricity grid. Existing gas power stations rarely turn on. In 2020, NSW's gas power stations hardly turned on. They had a capacity factor of just 1.6%.

This is because gas power stations are struggling to compete with far cheaper energy sources like coal, wind and solar. Snowy Hydro already owns a large gas power station in New South Wales: the Colongra gas power station. If Snowy Hydro already own a gas power station that they hardly ever turn on, why do they want to build another?

Gas power stations can be unreliable- in February 2017, Snowy Hydro's existing Colongra gas power station failed to start due to low gas pressure in its supply lines,

forcing AEMO to protect the grid by ordering the Tomago Aluminium Smelter to cut demand. This brings into question the claim that gas power stations can always act as a reliable backup.

We have clean and affordable alternatives to gas -batteries and pumped hydro can provide clean and affordable power. These are dispatchable technologies and batteries are being embraced by the private sector, with a number of projects planned in NSW. Snowy hydro should invest in these technologies to help reduce New South Wales' emissions, improve grid security and put downward pressure on electricity prices.

Other factors to consider:

Local impacts on air pollution, noise, amenity.

Lack of jobs

Energy experts say we do not need another gas power station in NSW. Gas is expensive, and forcing households and businesses to use more of it will push up power prices. In recent years, the amount of gas power being used in the National Electricity Market has fallen dramatically and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) says it will continue to fall, because it is expensive compared with renewable energy paired with storage like batteries; and it is polluting.

Facing widespread criticism from independent experts who say gas subsidies are a bad idea, the government has ignored their advice, even [pressured them to change their analysis](#), and [paid millions for advice that suits its agenda](#).

The federal government's ad hoc and dangerous interventions in the energy market are even opposed by many gas companies. The government is creating chaos and further investment uncertainty at a time when we need clear, science-based climate and energy policies.

This power station would likely become a major, publicly-funded customer for the gas fracked by Santos at its proposed Narrabri coal seam gas project. This gas would likely be transported south via the proposed Hunter Gas Pipeline - which may also be publicly subsidised.

Santos Ltd is a major oil and gas corporation and one of the biggest donors to political parties in Australia. This is unacceptable! Freedom of Information documents show Santos asked the government to subsidise the Hunter Gas Pipeline, which later confirmed it was in talks with the government about getting subsidies.

These projects are all calling for the Government to subsidise them with public money, and are [all linked to large political donations](#):

The owner of the proposed site for Kurri Kurri power station described himself, in an Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) hearing, as a "walking ATM" for political donations, and was found by ICAC to have made illegal donations.

The lead proponent of the Hunter Gas Pipeline project has also been a major donor to the Liberal Party.

Gas is a polluting fossil fuel that harms our waterways, land and air. Polluting unconventional gas fields are opposed by many frontline Aboriginal communities as a risk to land and water, disrupt rural communities, industrialise farmland, threaten water sources, and carve out huge amounts of land for well pads, pipelines, and new access roads.

Mining and burning gas is fueling climate change, harming health, driving disasters and damaging the economy. Multinational gas companies have been ripping us off for years. They pay little or no tax from exporting overseas most of the gas they mine in Australia while we're left paying high prices for our own gas. All in all, this proposal is unacceptable on all levels.

Yours in trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Davis', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Jan Davis
President Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.