

Snowy 2.0 Submission

I am making this submission regarding Snowy 2.0 because several issues arise from the documentation I have read that give me great cause for concern. The issues deal with the overall feasibility of the project and matters of access to Currango, a place I and my family have been visiting at least twice a year since 1978.

A. Feasibility.

1. Off peak/peak power differentials.

The difference between on and off peak power will be the driver that makes the concept a financial possibility, as I understand it. We now have an acceptance throughout the power generation industry, notwithstanding the lack of policy overall, that renewables are getting cheaper and will be the backbone in the system provided battery storage is developed in parallel. The battery ensures continuity of power delivery as the source of supply varies. If the seamless provision of deliverable power that is aimed for is achieved, where will the differential between on and off peak power, essential for the Snowy 2.0 concept to be feasible come from?

The costs reported do not include connection costs with the grid and those costs are reported to greatly exceed the cost of construction of the tunnel and power station. It has been said that those costs would be born by the entities that would contract to distribute Snowy 2.0 power, in other words power prices are likely to be kept high and not reduced, which has been touted as one of the benefits of the scheme.

2. Spoil.

I understand that the excavated material is to be deposited at the upper and lower ends of the new tunnel. The quantity at 5m m3 or thereabouts, is substantial and varied, being slurry, fines, and rock in great quantity. Most of this material is from great depth and is likely to be in part radio active and also in part, toxic.

It has been proposed that the material be deposited in Tantangara and Talbingo dams. The effects of this will be substantial on the ecology of the water systems at and adjacent to these water bodies. The effects, whilst they may be modelled, cannot be assessed in a way that can give any surety that great damage will be avoided. Only the passage of time can reveal the full impacts of such a proposal for spoil disposal. Equally, if the material were to be deposited above ground, the impact would be broadspread, and devastating to the ecology of the whole of the area.

3. Water

I understand how the proposed scheme will work and have seen its like at work in the UK and Norway. The water will need to be reasonably clean. Given the deteriorating climate regime there will be less water of adequate quality available. The massive damage being done to the park by feral horses in particular has caused high turbidity throughout the catchment area. With new legislation now in place that will secure an ever expanding population of these animals adequate water quality will be hard to obtain. Does the major shareholder intend to bring pressure to bear on the state legislature to wind back this law?

4. Fishery

I am told that Redfin exist in Talbingo, but not in the upper waters of the Murrumbidgee/Eucumbene river systems. I understand that trout and redfin cannot exist together and that redfin will outbreed and dominate any waterway. A group of us along with fisherfolk from across Australia have travelled to this area for trout fishing since late in the nineteenth century. Clearly water being circulated by Snowy 2.0 will contaminate all of the upper systems with redfin and the trout fishing and associated tourism will cease. Has the impact of redfin on the ecology and

economy of the high country been factored into the feasibility of Snowy 2.0? How can any assurance be given that contamination can be avoided?

B. Access to Currango.

1. Background

The historic and current social and cultural importance of this place is significant. Situated on the Port Philip Gap road close beside the causeway that crosses Gurangorambla Creek on the Currango Plain, the place was at the centre of summer grazing activity and was a social centrepiece. I understand that after completion of the works the dam level will be maintained around 70% full. This is a level very rarely reached, and from memory has been achieved on only perhaps three or four occasions during the open access season since 1978.

2. Activities

Access via the Port Philip trail to the west connects Currango with local activities such as Blue Waterholes, Coolamine Homestead, the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, Yarrangobilly Caves and by walking track to Old Currango across the Currango plain. All are regularly visited by those staying at Currango. The journey time to these places when Port Philip access is permanently closed and the Tantangara Rd, Snowy Mountains Highway, Long Plain Rd route must be used would add 1.25hrs each way. With no alternative access Currango will become an end of the road place with very limited activities and in consequence very limited appeal.

3. Viability

The ability of the place to cover its costs, not yet achieved, will be next to impossible.

4. Fire

The surrounding area has been subjected to several fires since the turn of the millennium and it is only by great good fortune that Currango has survived. Positioned some 24 or so kms from the Snowy Mountains Hwy means an alternative escape route is essential. The effective closure of Port Philip trail would take away that escape.

Conclusion

There are genuine reasons to regard the feasibility as flawed. Whereas its execution perhaps fifteen years ago, commissioned before the downward spiral of costs for renewable supply was understood, would have been reasonable and have had the sort of foresight we should expect from our political arm today, to move forward now seems to be driven more by political expedience than economic reality. Furthermore there appears to be a lack of honesty about real costs and likely returns both to the shareholder and the paying public as potential users.

The impacts on the pattern of uses enjoyed by generations of visitors past and future will be devastating without real alternative full time access being negotiated by the power authority with the KNP.

In my view Snowy 2.0 should not proceed.

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