

## Submission on proposed Newcastle Power Station

The need for a gas fired Power Generation facility is obvious as a transition between coal fired and renewable generation technologies. However, the proposed location leaves much to be desired.

There are environmental considerations over the present area proposed for the Power station as it is in a green corridor linking natural bush areas from the West of Lake Macquarie to Blackbutt Reserve at New Lambton, the Hunter Wetlands and Kooragang Island in the South to the Tilligerry State Conservation area, Moffats Swamp nature reserve, the Medowie State Conservation areas, and various forest and National Park reserves to the North, East and West. At present this corridor contains some industrial operations mostly distributed leaving quite a few remaining patches of bushland and quite a few trees. It would be detrimental to this nature corridor if the power station was built in a fashion similar to the existing coal fired power stations with a clear felling of all trees and undergrowth in the area. The shape of the lot is elongated East/West presenting a barrier to wildlife North/South migration. The land could be retained for future expansion of the adjacent industrial area with covenants providing each industrial lot retains some trees and/or even provide small green corridor areas along boundary fences.

The proposed location of the power station and its' proximity to areas to the East currently contaminated with PFAS presents a unique opportunity. These properties are used mostly for farm type activities, are on flat ground and have already been cleared of most of the natural vegetation. They are also East of the green corridor area referred to above, and are closer to the Hunter River (cooling water?). The State Government would solve at least some of the current problems for people in this area. A buy-out and land swap could be arranged by the State Government. This contaminated land would no longer be needed for farming and the residual contamination in the soil would not be a problem for this industrial land use. There are no technical limitations entailed in such a move. Connections to the natural gas supply may entail a few more kilometres of piping. The electrical connection to the State power grid near the Tomago Aluminium Refinery may involve additional cable runs.

AGL has reportedly been looking at electrolysis technologies utilising solar generated electricity to provide low pollution, non-fossil sourced generation for those times when solar generation is unavailable. Hopefully they are looking at constructing a plant capable of dual fuel operation. With this in mind the areas of PFAS contaminated land are almost flat making them ideal for a solar farm. The land swap could be made to a larger area compensating more properties and providing space for the inevitable need to expand solar farms. There will be some additional expense, however, in the long term, the relocation of this facility to the suggested Williamstown area is a small price to pay. The Federal Government could be lobbied to contribute to the re-location costs.

The issues associated with the PFAS contaminated sites are complex and will take time to resolve. The evidence of harm to humans and animals is unclear, and is unlikely to be resolved any time soon, as much of the data relies on statistics. With a relatively small number of effected humans and animals the statistical certainties may take years to reach a high level of resolution. This problem will not be as easy to finalise, as for instance the certainties that smoking causes respiratory diseases. The resumption of the contaminated land for this State Significant Project introduces a circuit breaker of sorts for some of the land owners in the affected area, and a politically astute move showing the public that at least something is being done to help some of the property owners whom are presently in limbo. Opportunities such as this do not come often.