

OBJECTION – GLENDELL CONTINUED OPERATIONS PROJECT

Climate Action Newcastle *objects* to the Glendell Continued Operations Project mine proposal on the basis of unacceptable impacts on Earth's climate.

The project proposes to extract 140 million tonnes of run-of-mine coal until 2044 which is well past the time all jurisdictions should have completely replaced thermal coal - if attempting to preserve life on Earth.

The estimated 230.8 million tonnes of greenhouse gases from the 140 million tonnes of coal combusted from this project would be an unacceptable addition to the burden of greenhouse pollution already in the atmosphere from Hunter Valley coal mines and other sources across the world. The window of opportunity to act on emissions reduction is rapidly closing and the moral and social licence for such an emissions intensive project has already run out.

While the greenhouse gas accounting framework emissions under The Paris Agreement would ascribe this project as being under Scope 3 "downstream emissions" to be burned in other jurisdictions, Climate Action Newcastle does not accept that the New South Wales government which seeks to profit from this enterprise, should not also take responsibility for the contribution these emissions will make on global heating. We have one shared global atmosphere and carbon pollution causing global heating affects all jurisdictions.

By the proponent's own admission this project is consistent with the IPCC's high emissions climate scenario which would see Earth warm by around 3.4C this century. It must surely be recognised, after the horrifying and consequential fires right across Australia in Spring and Summer 2019-2020, that even 1 degree warming is not safe for life human habitation or other species on Earth. Deliberately tracking for 3+C degrees most certainly defies rationality and renders notions of intergenerational equity null. We sincerely ask of the proponent and project assessors: how can this coal mine extension proposal be more important than life itself?

Earth is past 412 parts per million CO₂ equivalent.¹ It is recognised that 360 parts per million CO₂ equivalent is the historical benchmark for the stability of Earth's safe climate. It is reckless and irresponsible keep adding to the accumulated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by mining and combusting more coal.

The absence of a plan to assist the Hunter Valley to restructure away of coal is an indictment on planners and decision-makers of the New South Wales government, who are over-reliant on coal royalties. This sees a perverse incentive to continue approving coal mines despite the known realities of extreme climate risk.

Coal-exposed communities such as the Hunter Valley are left vulnerable to the risk of mass unemployment as coal mines become 'stranded assets' and employment in coal jobs drops away.

In recent months investment funds across the world have been dumping coal investments.^{2, 3} This is the start of a global trend and only a matter of time before this hits the Hunter Valley. We need to immediately prepare for this seismic economic change - not further entrench the out-dated and risky fossil fuel sector.

Another problem is that as coal mines such as Glendell fail due to the inevitable economic restructuring away from fossil fuels, the likelihood of bankruptcy may see the proponent walk away from mine rehabilitation commitments. Rather than this mine being an economic boon for the State, it stands to become an economic burden, with the cost and resourcing of mine rehabilitation falling back on the State.

Furthermore, entrenching coal mining in an area such as the Hunter Valley comes at an opportunity cost.

"Australia is richly endowed with resources that allow it to prosper from a global movement to zero net emissions. If we take early and strong action in ways that build upon our natural advantages, we will not suffer a decline in living standards in the near future in conventional economic terms as we move towards zero emissions."

Alongside our strength in renewable energy, our advantages in growing, using and sequestering carbon in biomass will set Australia up as the international superpower of the low-carbon world economy. But for this to occur, Australia will need to regain its former strength in research and education on agricultural, pastoral, forestry and related industrial activities.

The low-carbon world economy will be especially favourable for rural and provincial Australia. Energy will be produced mainly outside the large cities, much of it in remote locations. This will make it commercially attractive to process many Australian mineral and agricultural goods into products of higher value close to the sources of the basic commodities. A new carbon-farming industry, prospering exceptionally in less agriculturally productive regions, will add substantially to rural incomes." ⁴ Ross Garnaut

New low or zero-carbon industries should be fostered instead of coal both to reduce climate risk, as well as to allow new industries to get ahead of the already fast-developing low-carbon market. We urge planning for a rapid exit from coal commence in earnest immediately.

"Climate change is an immediate existential threat to human civilization and requires fundamentally different governance and risk management from conventional practice. All fossil fuel expansion must stop and existing industries wound back". Ian Dunlop - ex-fossil fuel executive. Climate Emergency Summit Melbourne 14/2/20

Short-term jobs in coal mining and mining royalties can in no way justify the opportunity cost of mining and the immediate and escalating impacts of global heating. This mine extension poses an unacceptable risk to human safety and life on Earth and must be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

The Committee - Climate Action Newcastle
14 February 2020

1. <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/carbon-dioxide/>
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-15/worlds-largest-fund-manager-to-cut-thermal-coal-exposure/11869300>
3. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-13/norway-sovereign-wealth-fund-to-ditch-billions-in-coal-stakes/11205134>
4. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/taking-our-chance-the-low-carbon-future-should-belong-to-australia-20191029-p535g8.html> edited extract of Ross Garnaut's *Superpower: Australia's Low-Carbon Opportunity*, La Trobe University Press, published on November 2019.