



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date: 6th October 2013

Submission

to

Department of Planning

on

Port Waratah Coal Services' proposed new coal export terminal at Newcastle

Compiled by John Edwards
Honorary Secretary

Submission to Department of Planning on Port Waratah Coal Services' proposed new coal export terminal at Newcastle

Preamble.

The Clarence Environment Centre (CEC) has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 23 years, and has a proud record of environmental advocacy. Therefore, because the appropriate provision of energy is at the very core of the solution to global warming, we are compelled to comment on the above proposal which will facilitate the escalation of greenhouse gas emissions around the world, and therefore contribute to the likelihood of catastrophic climate change.

The CEC believes that Climate Change is real. Major catastrophic climate events have occurred with increased frequency over the past decade, all of which have been deemed to have broken all existing records, such as Hurricane Katrina, and Super storm Sandy in the USA, record floods in Pakistan, Thailand, and most of south east Asia, deadly fires in Victoria, killer tornadoes in the USA, and heat waves across both the southern and northern hemisphere, along with the Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi, just to name a few. YES climate change is a reality.

Direct outcomes of the coal loading facility

The direct and indirect social, and environmental impacts of this coal loading facility are as follows:

- It will facilitate the expansion of coal mining in the Hunter and Liverpool Plains, doubling the dust and noise for communities already affected by the coal trains in Newcastle and beyond,
- it will double the pollution impact of the coal exported from NSW, that has already seen life expectancy levels in the Hunter Valley significantly lower than the rest of Australia,
- the additional 41 coal trains through the Hunter Valley every day will see an increase in asthma and other respiratory ailments, caused by coal dust and particulates, in a region that is already suffering significantly higher levels than elsewhere in Australia,
- according to medical experts it will add to the pollutants that affect all major body organs and contribute to morbidity and mortality,
- it will see the destruction of endangered ecological communities and habitat for threatened species, including the Green and Golden Bell Frog and Australasian Bittern. We understand the project's Environmental Assessment fails to meet the requirements set out by both the State and Federal agencies, with the proposal representing an unacceptable risk to the Australasian Bittern,
- it risks mobilising toxic contaminants on Kooragang Island, the former BHP Steelworks site, and in the South Arm of the Hunter River. Too little is known about the risks to ensure the communities of Newcastle will be protected from toxic spills through seepage and accidents. Despite this there is no comprehensive plan for remediation of the sites,
- it will see the destruction of internationally significant wetlands that provide critical habitat for a range of aquatic native fauna. It will see the loss of habitat at "Deep Pond", which will be lost to the project, and its proximity to the Hunter estuary Ramsar site, which is relied on by at least 11 species of migratory birds that are protected by international treaties, will likely cause lasting impacts. Most of Deep Pond, the only freshwater refuge in the Hunter estuary, would be lost to this project,
- an area within the site is currently part of the National Parks estate, and provides irreplaceable habitat for migratory shore birds. The proposal will mean loss of habitat and disruption to an ecologically significant proportion of a population of four migratory shorebird species listed under international conservation conventions,

- it will facilitate the development of the equivalent of at least 15 'mega-pits' in the prime agricultural regions of the Upper Hunter and Liverpool Plains which will threaten food and water security by destroying prime agricultural land, irreversibly damaging ground water systems, polluting waterways and, in areas like the Leard State Forest, will see wholesale destruction of native forest including 5 nationally listed critically endangered ecological communities,
- and more importantly, the coal exported through that one extra loader, would provide the capacity to feed dozens more large power stations around the world emitting 288 million tonnes of carbon pollution each year.

Economic justification

Like the proponents we could focus on economic benefits, jobs created, and economic growth. However, we believe other economic realities should be considered, such as:

- the fact that mining booms drive up the value of the Australian dollar, placing unacceptable pressures on traditional industries, particularly agriculture and manufacturing,
- the fact that the jobs created actually rob other sectors of industry, and drive up wages for those industries already under pressure from the high Australian dollar,
- following construction, the coal terminal will not provide significant additional employment,
- it will result in the loss of tourist dollars,
- it is likely to have negative impacts on recreational fishing and boating,
- existing royalties and taxes provide no long-term benefits for the people of Australia,
- existing royalties and taxes provide no funding for the future clean-up, much less the cost of adaptation to climate change.

Rationale

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is reporting that $\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}\text{C}$ global warming has already occurred and predict a further 1 to 5 degrees of warming by 2075, effectively bringing the end date for those figures forward by 25 years. Atmospheric carbon is now at its highest level in 600,000 years, which has accelerated the onset of climate change.

In February The International Energy Agency (IEA) identified in its Outlook 2012, that, by continuing business as usual, the world is currently on track for 6 degrees warming by 2100. It is predicted that catastrophic climate change will result long before that 6 degrees is reached.

The Australian Government's Energy White Paper, January 2012, clearly outlines plans to follow business as usual, identifying that we still have many decades of coal and gas reserves, and predicting that exports are set to rise steadily for the foreseeable future. It also boasts that, as well as being the world's largest coal exporter, Australia will soon be the world's second largest exporter of another polluting fossil fuel, gas, much of which comes from unconventional sources, the mining of which results in its carbon footprint being as high as coal.

The Head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, has famously stated that if climate change is not addressed, future generations will be toasted, roasted, grilled and fried. The World Bank too has expressed major concerns that, while governments around the world are taking measures to cut carbon emissions, Australia excepted, more needs to be done, as the world's disadvantaged peoples will suffer greatly if we fail to rein in climate change.

According to the IEA, if the world wishes to meet the 450 parts per million target for atmospheric carbon, no further coal fired power stations should be built after 2017. Therefore the ongoing burning of that additional coal and gas will ensure runaway global warming and catastrophic climate change. We believe a statement by the British “Eradicate Ecocide” movement is very pertinent. That organisation attempted to introduce a new law of ecocide to the United Nations, and made the point that: ***“Not one Member State can justify putting humanity at risk when the whole of civilisation stands on the brink of disaster”.***

Despite this, recent government policies, at both State and Federal levels, have seen significant cuts to renewable energy subsidies and programs and, along with the Queensland and Western Australian Governments, are pushing to increase exports of coal and gas. The NSW Government has walked away from its 20% renewable energy target by 2020, and the Federal Government has 'sacked' the Climate Change Committee, and declared climate change to be a “myth”.

In conclusion

In consideration of all of the above, we believe there can be no justification for the construction of a 4th coal loading facility. At the same time we remind the government that it has a duty of care for its citizens, to provide a healthy environment in which they can live, with clean air to breathe, and water to drink. We believe that by approving the dozens of new coal mine projects that are currently in the pipeline across Australia, particularly NSW and Queensland, governments will be placing those essential life supports at risk.

Therefore we urge the Department of Planning, in the strongest possible terms, to reject the plan for the proposed coal loading facility, and recommend the Government do everything in its power to facilitate the development of clean renewable energy projects in this state, projects that could generate far more jobs than mining, and healthier living environments for residents of this state.

We thank the Minister for this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary