

**Submission
No 132**

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW

Name: Ms Robyn Bird

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Robyn Bird



Dear Committee,

Please accept this submission to the Inquiry into Sustainability of Energy Supply and Resources in NSW.

I live in the New England district and have spent most of my working life as a locum pharmacist in the New England and Hunter regions.

The NSW Energy and Environment Minister, Matt Kean, said that the government had been elected on a policy of achieving carbon neutrality by mid-century and "we are working on that". The New England and Hunter regions can contribute to that achievement of carbon neutrality because of their abundant supplies of renewable energy resources such as solar, wind and ingredients for biodigestors.

People in the New England and Hunter are already planning for a renewable future. A great example is the Manilla Community Renewable Energy Inc which is planning a biodigester in Tamworth and a 2 KW solar farm where grazing can occur on the same land. The NSW State government has released a new funding opportunity ,the Regional Community Energy Fund, which is a perfect match for the Manilla Solar Farm and for other similar projects.

There is ample opportunity in our regional areas for institutions such as schools ,councils, businesses and farming enterprises to produce their own solar energy. There is the space for wind farms and certainly enough agricultural residues such as straw and manures to be used in biodigesters which produce energy as well as products such as biochar.

Renewable energy is a better source of energy than coal or CSG because it is non- polluting and does not cause health problems. eg. Liddell and Bayswater power stations near Muswellbrook in the Hunter are amongst the world's worst emitters of toxins. Just one of the toxic gases emitted , sulphur dioxide, can cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease. There are many other equally noxious pollutants emitted. There are insufficient air monitors in the New England Hunter areas to adequately monitor air pollution. Whitehaven Coal Mining Limited was convicted of breaching it's environmental protection licence at the Rocglen Mine near Gunnedah by using an explosive which caused harmful pollutants to be blown over neighbouring farmland. The company also failed to notify the neighbouring properties of the potential hazard.

Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind do not waste vast quantities of water. This year Whitehaven Coal's Maules Creek mine has been allowed to take water from the Namoi despite the NSW government barring all pumping from the Namoi catchment..and we are in a drought. Farmers have bores in the Maules creek area which have never been dry before and feel it is caused by the mines....they have never gone dry in previous droughts . Whitehaven mines is also pricing farmers out of the water market having bought ground water at twice the usual market value. Refer to The Land newspaper report 1st March 2019. Santos has already polluted water on a number of occasions at the Narrabri CSG project. This project is situated on one of the very few recharge areas of the Great Artesian Basin. The Great Artesian Basin, one of the largest underground freshwater

resources in the world, can not be put at risk. The huge quantities of waste water from this project would contain vast amounts of toxic salts.

Coal mines and CSG projects turn vast tracks of land into wastelands.

It is vital that NSW moves to a renewable energy future in order to keep pace with the rest of the world eg last year renewables overtook coal as the chief source of energy in Germany. Germany will exit coal power by 2038. The Office of the Chief Economist shows likely declines in coal imports from the Hunter's largest coal customers: Japan, South Korea and China. I do not wish to have coal workers in NSW trapped in a stranded industry.

It is important that there is early and comprehensive planning for a transition from fossil-fuelled based energy to renewable energy. The Ruhr Valley in Germany began planning an eleven year process in 2007 to transition out of coal. This process which had much community involvement has been successful and is a good example to follow unlike the , unmanaged and unplanned coal closure in the Appalachia region in the USA which has resulted in poverty and social dysfunction. Our coal workers will need alternate employment in fulfilling jobs.

There are many opportunities for jobs and a better quality of life in a renewable energy economy. The Hunter Renewal Roadmap is an excellent living document of a community- driven renewal plan. This community can see the possibilities of the First Nations Peoples knowledge of the land and waterways to rehabilitate the land and waterways . It would be essential for the mines to pay fully,for this rehabilitation.The community can also foresee many jobs in research similar to the development of organic printed solar at the University of Newcastle and of necessity research into storage systems for renewable energy. The opportunities for tourism and further development of existing industries such as agriculture , education and transport are unlimited. Newcastle has a deep port suitable for many possible export opportunities.

Dr Neil Perry's publication "Weathering the Storm" contains research which shows that if action is taken now to prepare and plan for change the Hunter region could see 595 more new jobs created than are lost from coal mining .

The Hunter Renewal Roadmap is really tailor-made for a community which will have to transition out of coal and wishes to do so with community involvement, worker re-training and re-employment . It will need public investment and good government planning. This roadmap could be a plan for other communities to follow.

I hope the committee will hold public hearings in our regional towns.

Thank you
Yours sincerely,
Robyn Bird

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