

**Submission  
No 172**

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Singleton Council

**Date Received:** 15 September 2019

13 September 2019

**Committee Chair**

Committee on Environment and Planning

Dear Mr Chair

**RE: Sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW**

On 16 July 2019, the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Planning self-referred an enquiry into the sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW. The terms of reference to the enquiry were:

1. The capacity and economic opportunities of renewable energy.
2. Emerging trends in energy supply and exports, including investment and other financial arrangements.
3. The status of and forecasts for energy and resource markets.
4. Effects on regional communities, water security, the environment and public health.
5. Opportunities to support sustainable economic development in regional and other communities likely to be affected by changing energy and resource markets, including the role of government policies.
6. Any other related matters.

The coal mining industry is the largest contributor to the Singleton Local Government Area (LGA) economy in terms of local employment and gross revenue. In 2018, it was estimated that the mining industry was responsible for generating billions in gross revenue, 61.5% of the total gross revenue from the Singleton Local Government Area, and provides approximately 6,626 local jobs, 40.6% of the total number of jobs in the local government area.

The reliance of the Singleton economy on mining for employment and outputs, makes the economy highly susceptible to resource market trends. Broadening the mix of industries that operate within the local government area and growing pre-existing industries will provide much needed resilience for the local economy as well as generate new opportunities for investment, skills growth and employment in the local government area.

Singleton has identified the need for diversification within both its socio-economic development strategy and its Local Strategic Planning Statement, where land use opportunities and constraints will impact future diversification outcomes.

Specifically there is a need to facilitate the establishment of renewable energy production facilities in appropriate locations. To that end, the existing electricity

transmission network of the Singleton LGA provides excellent opportunities for the distribution of electricity generated by renewable energy production facilities in the LGA to the broader network.

The LGA is considered to have substantial prospects available for the generation of energy from solar, wind and geothermal resources. Large areas of the LGA receive sufficient levels of solar radiation for effective solar electricity production. There are areas of the LGA that have the necessary geological characteristics required for geothermal energy generation. Opportunities exist in the higher altitude areas of the LGA to generate electricity from wind power. There are also prospects available to utilise former mine sites for generation of off-river pumped hydro-electric energy. All energy sources have some impact on the environment when used for electricity production. The extent of impacts can differ according to the technology used, geographic location and various other factors. In NSW, approximately 83% of total electricity generation was from fossil fuels, whereas only 17% was from renewable fuels.

Such factors include economic investment and employment as well as technical capabilities and social considerations. It is important to give due consideration to these factors if the Singleton LGA is to grow its renewable energy sector. This will involve research and review of local planning instruments and controls to ensure that any unnecessary barriers to the establishment of renewable energy production facilities are minimised and that economic, technical and social considerations are appropriately addressed.

As a result, action is required to identify industry diversification opportunities, avoid land use conflicts, promote a mix of land use outcomes, investigate emerging opportunities and develop strategic long term post mining land use outcomes. These actions have been identified by the Singleton community through consultation on the Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement, and Council will continue to seek government support in the investigation and implementation of actions and outcomes.

Separate to, yet related, is the need to protect the health and amenity of the community. Whilst there are many elements that can influence the physical and mental health of persons in the community, a known contributing factor to health is environment. The design and amenity of places can significantly influence whether people engage in activities and routines that improve their physical state and wellbeing or whether they engage in activities and habits that diminish their health.

The Liveability Assessment Tool, developed in 2012 by Hunter New England Population Health links health with the liveability of places and identifies 15 focus areas to consider when determining whether a place constitutes a healthy living environment.

The tool provides opportunities for the Council to review the liveability of Singleton's urban areas, to better understand the liveability of its neighbourhoods and to identify opportunities to improve local urban living environments, in terms of healthy living and amenity.

In addition to people's living environment, access to healthcare is another important factor when considering community health. The demand for healthcare in the region is expected to grow with forecast increases in the ageing population.

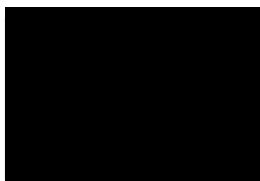
The largest public healthcare facility in the LGA is Singleton Hospital, which is located within the eastern section of downtown Singleton. Expanding the provision of healthcare facilities in the Singleton LGA would be conducive to economic objectives to diversify the LGA's industry base. Clustering allows facilities to leverage the benefits of having associated services nearby and creates a one-stop-shop for healthcare.

Poor air quality can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Minimising the exposure of residents to such impacts, through avoidance of development near industries that have a negative impact on land use, can help improve health and wellbeing prospects. The establishment of higher air quality standards, and the requirement to meet them, is necessary for the future growth of resource intensive regions.

As a result, action is required to minimise exposure of future residents to adverse air quality impacts, through improved land use planning outcomes at both a local and state level (where development is assessed as State significant), align planning for recreation infrastructure and facilities with plans for healthy neighbourhoods, and determine liveability of the urban areas across Singleton LGA. These actions have been identified by the Singleton community through consultation on the Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement, and Council will continue to seek government support in the investigation and implementation of actions and outcomes.

I would like to thank the Parliamentary Committee for the opportunity to provide comment on the enquiry into the sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager Development and Environmental Services on [REDACTED].

Yours faithfully

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Mary-Anne Crawford  
**Manager Development and Environmental Services**