

**Submission
No 183**

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW

Name: Cr Sarah Lukeman

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15/9/19

Submission: Parliamentary inquiry into the sustainability of energy supply and resources

Committee on Environment and Planning:

Thank you for initiating this inquiry and giving me the opportunity to make a submission.

I was elected as an independent to Singleton Council in 2016, where I lived from 2011 until the start of this year, when I moved to Maitland. I have lived and worked in mining communities around the world since finishing my engineering degree at Sydney University in 1990.

I have been very disappointed with the simplistic, binary discourse on energy generation in Australia. Many working in the coal industry believe the majority scientific position of enhanced climate change due to the emission of greenhouse gases by human activity since the industrial revolution. They also want to live and work in a safe and clean environment, with jobs that give financial security for them and their children.

Whilst we have coal mines, we need people to work in them, and they cannot be treated as pariahs by the burgeoning renewable energy sector and wider community. Everyone suffers when our differences are the focus of debate, rather than our similarities.

Australia has few world class industries, but mining is one of them. Australians are found in mining companies all around the world. Many working in the coal mining industry will be able to relocate into other minerals and resources and take their families with them. Those working in supporting industries and services will not be so transferable and will be negatively impacted by a reduction in population and economic activity in the region. Innovative, new industries utilising the assets of the region need to be stimulated and supported by government, as existing industries will not be able to provide the high paying jobs of the mining industry.

Regional areas need the world class industries of tomorrow to replace the jobs that coal mining provides today.

A planned, just transition is needed to maintain a diverse and healthy regional economy.

The health of residents of the Hunter, particularly Muswellbrook and Singleton, is compromised due to the emission of PM2.5 and SOx and NOx from the Liddell and Bayswater coal-fired power stations. The emissions do not meet world health standards due to the age of the facilities and the old technology they use. AGL is doing the right thing by the Hunter community in having a transparent and well planned closure process, despite the Federal Government's attempts to delay the process. It is to the benefit of the Hunter community that the current dirty power generation is replaced by clean renewables that will no longer make us sick.

Old coal-fired power stations should be phased out as soon as possible to protect the health of the surrounding citizens and reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

I support the Hunter Renewal Roadmap and its demands for:

- A community-driven process that builds on the Hunter region's strengths and has strong local participation embedded in the process.
- New well-paid and secure jobs for people affected by mining downturns – not just those working directly in the mining industry.
- A \$2 billion fund dedicated to coal mining regions to help us plan and prepare.
- A Hunter Diversification Taskforce (or Transition Authority) led by locals from the community, local government, unions and business to coordinate planning.
- A Hunter Regional Diversification Plan building on our strengths and bringing development of industry, labour-intensive projects and education, training and technology hubs.
- Better laws for rehabilitation and relinquishment of mines and power stations, boosting the jobs available now and into the future. Cumulative impacts must be considered, as the Singleton LGA will have 11 toxic-water filled voids in perpetuity based on current approvals.

Additionally, I feel strongly that:

- Mining companies – especially large multi-nationals – should not be able to on-sell their liability closed operations;
- The inquiry should hold public hearings in Muswellbrook, Singleton and Newcastle to hear from local people and businesses;
- Australia should examine the transition processes of other regions and apply the lessons here;
- Newcastle should develop a container terminal to support regional economic diversification;

I look forward to further discussions on transforming the Hunter Region.

Cr Sarah Lukeman

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Sincerely,

Sarah Lukeman