

**Submission
No 206**

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW

Name: Dr Fiona McCormick

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Formal submission from Dr McCormick to Inquiry into Energy Supply and Resources in NSW

I am a GP living and working in the Northern Rivers region of NSW. I am a member of Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) as my work has shown me that we cannot have healthy people without a healthy society and a healthy planet to sustain us. It is worth noting that in spite of lower than average household income, our region has around 38% take up of rooftop PV, reflecting a heightened awareness of the importance of and feasibility of sustainable energy production.

I intend to address each of the stated terms of reference in order.

1. The capacity and economic opportunities of renewable energy. In my opinion this was best summarised nearly 10 years ago in the Beyond Zero Emissions Zero Carbon 2020 Stationary Energy Report found here: <https://bze.org.au/research/renewable-energy-plan/> Opportunities for large scale investment in solar thermal, solar PV and wind still exist and the cost of this investment continues to decrease over time as the technology improves and is being scaled up.

2. Emerging trends in energy supply and exports, including investment and other financial arrangements. I am not an economist, however have noted that (for instance) a Singaporean company intends to invest some \$20 billion in solar PV in Australia and export that energy at profit. I strongly support this, however cannot but wonder why our own governments are not investing in this technology to improve our own energy security. Instead there is a worrying tendency to follow the American example and consider exporting woodchips for power generation overseas: this (as I shall delineate below) needs to be stopped before it goes any further. I refer the Inquiry Committee to the movie "Burned" for further information on why this is not a good idea (www.burnedthemovie.com).

3. The status of and forecasts for energy and resource markets. I will leave this to the economists.

4. Effects on regional communities, water security, the environment and public health. There are substantial public health issues around the mining of and burning of coal, and I will refer the Inquiry Committee to Doctors for the Environment Australia reports on coal, air pollution and climate change at the website www.dea.org.au, and in particular the page on air pollution:

<https://www.dea.org.au/air-pollution/>

There is an urgent need to reduce toxic gas and greenhouse gas emissions in order to protect our children, who are more susceptible to lung damage from inhaling gases such as nitric oxide and sulphur dioxide and the particulates produced by the burning of fossil fuels. I refer the Inquiry Committee to the DEA report "No time for Games" on the impacts of climate change on children's health.

Locally we are being subject to over 20 semi-trailer movements per day along winding country roads (designated tourist drives, no less!) with the attendant emissions. This is in order to cart woodchips from harvesting timber on failed Forestry Alliance sites near Woodenbong to the sugar mills at Condong and Broadwater in order to generate electricity which is falsely being advertised as "renewable". People along these roads are sustaining damage to their properties caused by the vibration of the heavy vehicles, as well as loss of amenity and air pollution. They are also extremely anxious about the risk of fatal accidents as these trucks are forced to cross the double white lines on blind corners as they are simply too large for the roads. They are also incurring vehicle damage due to the potholes and road surface damage caused by this increase in heavy vehicle traffic. I have attached photos below of one truck which held up traffic on the Kyogle-Murwillumbah Road for 6 hours, coming off the road just before the arrival of the afternoon school bus - causing immense disruption to usual school pickups, and another which demonstrates that semi-trailer trucks are too long for our country roads (although the second was not a woodchip carrying vehicle, it shows how they need to cross the safety lines on blind corners)

Cutting down the trees on the failed plantations removes vital habitat as well. This process also removes the ability of those trees to sequester carbon dioxide. What bothers me most about this is that there is absolutely no accountability of emissions caused by a) the removal of trees as CO2 sequesterers b) the processing and transport of these trees into woodchips and c) the burning of this

timber in the mills. Burning of timber generates 39 kg of CO2 per Kwh, whereas burning of coal generates 34 kg per Kwh - so how could the burning of "biomass" ever be considered a source of "renewable" energy? (Ref: https://www.volker-quaschnig.de/datserv/CO2-spez/index_e.php)

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. See my point about the Singaporean company made above. We have ample sunlight to export!

6. Any other related matters. As a parent and (soon to be) grandparent I am deeply concerned about the intergenerational injustice of continuing to use fossil fuels. We are gradually losing our own Torres Strait islands to rising sea levels caused by warming oceans due to climate change, and there is gross injustice in the fact that low lying nations such as the Marshall Islands, the Maldives and Bangladesh have contributed least to global emissions yet are bearing the brunt of our continuing heating of the global climate. As a human being on this planet at this time I call for this Inquiry to urge our Government to divest from fossil fuels and invest in renewables. 100% Renewable is indeed 100% Doable. Right now please!

Thankyou for taking the time to read this, Fiona

Dr Fiona McCormick, B.Med, FRACGP

