

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW

Organisation: Illawarra Region Citizens

Date Received: 14 May 2020

An Illawarra Region Citizens' Supplementary Submission

to

**NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and
Planning**

**Inquiry into sustainability of energy
supply and resources in NSW**

Introduction

We are a group of five citizens of the Illawarra who have an interest in the environmentally sustainable and socially secure future of our region.

We are:

- Brian Mason ([REDACTED])
- Anne Marett ([REDACTED])
- Stephen Rix ([REDACTED])
- Deidre Stuart ([REDACTED]) and
- Stephen Young ([REDACTED]) .

Our substantive Submission to the Committee is listed as Number 220 on the Inquiry website.

This Supplementary Submission is a response to an email received from the Chair of the Committee on 4 May 2020 advising of a change to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. We have advised the Secretariat that we have proposed to make this Supplementary Submission (12 May 2020).

We refer the Committee to the following Recommendations we made in our substantive Submission:

II. Recommendation 2

That the NSW government establish a timetable, in consultation with impacted workers and industries, to phase out coal-mining in the catchment and employment transition.

V. Recommendation 5

That the NSW government build transition planning into the inevitable restructuring that will occur as NSW moves away from fossil fuels (option 3).

VI. Recommendation 6

That the NSW government fund a skills audit of workers affected by phasing out coal mining in the Illawarra.

VII. Recommendation 7

That the NSW government use the “Green Jobs for the Illawarra” project as a model for an approach to regional transition key elements being

1. Begin with an Illawarra Jobs Summit and follow up community forums to bring together stakeholders from unions, government, industry groups, manufacturing, small business, and University of Wollongong
2. Allocate funds to follow up recommendations
3. Utilise a revitalised and inclusive Regional Development Authority - Illawarra for coordination

Since that Submission was made, substantive research results on transition to a hydrogen economy have been published by the Grattan Institute¹.

We draw the Committee’s attention to Figure 1.4 (page 10) of the Institute’s Report. This Report shows that the Port Kembla/Wollongong region has one of the nation’s largest “carbon workforces”. The Report notes that these numbers are for those *directly* employed in carbon industries so does not, therefore, include the number of indirect carbon workers linked to carbon-intensive industries (ie there is no calculated employment multiplier).

The Report contains little optimism that these (relatively) high-wage carbon jobs can be retained under any environmentally responsible and realistic scenario.

It is, therefore, necessary and responsible for all decision-makers to devise transition strategies which provide opportunities for carbon workers during and following such transition.

The Recommendations copied from our substantive Submission are therefore reiterated here.

Extend our Recommendations

Indeed, we argue that our Recommendations have become more necessary and workable since the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the global society and economy. The

¹ Grattan Institute Report No. 2020-06, May 2020

pandemic has illustrated that people in all societies are willing to make fundamental changes to both protect their own lives and the lives of others. They have not needed “market-based incentives” to do so.

Even where national governments have not mandated lifestyle changes, citizens have shown themselves willing to self-enforce.

Where governments have failed to take heed of scientifically-based advice, citizens themselves have done so.

Where governments have demeaned and ridiculed science, citizens have demanded that their governments listen and act on the science.

In this situation, it is incumbent on Governments and law-makers to now apply those lessons to deal with the global environmental crisis engendered, as science tells us, by human activity.

The transition to a hydrogen economy provides significant opportunities for Australia’s carbon workforces, including that in the Illawarra. It is not necessary or advisable for us to reproduce sections of the Grattan Institute Report, but as citizens of the Illawarra we have been particularly impressed by the following statement:

Of Australia’s clean energy opportunities, the largest and most economically viable appears to be using renewable hydrogen to produce ‘green’ (near zero emissions) steel. (page 14)

The significance of this finding is that green steel provides a means of envisaging, strategizing and achieving a transition from coking coal (used in steel-making and the basis of Illawarra coal mining) as well as from thermal coal (used for generating electricity).

This highlights the relevance of our substantive Submission’s reference to coal mining in the Illawarra and the need for an employment-generating alternative, prohibiting the extension of mining (especially in water catchments) and revaluing and reassessing the assets held by coal mining companies, and their previous “gifts” to NSW citizens.

We argue not for a “return to normal” as the Covid-19 pandemic provisions are relaxed, but the creation of a new normal as we use the lessons of the pandemic’s effect to construct a suite of transition strategies to deal with our environmental crisis.