

**INQUIRY INTO COSTS FOR REMEDIATION OF SITES  
CONTAINING COAL ASH REPOSITORIES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
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# Submission

Monday, February 10, 2020

To  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Legislative Council  
Public Works Committee

## **Inquiry into the costs for remediation of sites containing coal ash repositories**

I am a private citizen and I have lived in the Lake Macquarie area for 60 years and have used the Lake for recreational purposes for all of that time. I have always taken action to ensure that I have not impacted on the lake environment. I have thoroughly washed my various vessels to ensure no transfer of plant material between the waterways I have used. I avoid wash to prevent erosion. I handle fuels and wastes carefully to avoid pollution. I participate in cleaning rubbish from the lake and surrounds. My father-in-law was likewise a very considerate lake user for over 60 years.

I was therefore very alarmed to find that pollutants have entered the lake from the Eraring and Vales Point ash dams and accumulated to dangerous levels. I have since avoided eating any seafood from the lake. I wonder if toxins such as cadmium, selenium, lead and mercury played any role in the early onset of dementia and death of my father-in-law, who for all of his life ate oysters, prawns, crabs and fish from the lake, as well as using lake seaweed on his vegetable gardens for over 60 years.

I feel angry and extremely let down by power station operators, governments and protection authorities for allowing the ash dam nightmare to evolve as it has. That wet ash dams have been allowed beside the biggest tidal lake in Australia is at least surprising to me. That they should still exist with no lining, known ground water contamination, no financial bond, no ash management plan and no adequate closure or rehabilitation plan is astounding. Given what we now know about the problems with wet ash dams and that the Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation facility has already been closed due to the identified risk, the notion that the dams could be extended is preposterous. Any idea of leaving the ash in place is totally socially irresponsible. The American experience tells us enough. I would hope that appropriate action now can avoid a coal ash disaster like the Tennessee Valley Authority Power Station, Harriman disaster, with its' unthinkable impact and billion dollar clean up.

I believe strongly that our local ash dams should be closed and rehabilitated as soon as possible. As there is already ground water contamination I believe that the best solution is to remove the ash from the site to be properly contained in a suitably lined dam with appropriate capping. The American experience shows that contamination can be significantly reduced by this means.

I further strongly believe that the cost of this rehabilitation should be met by the companies that currently profit from the operation of the power station and certainly not by the tax payer.

Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.