

**Submission  
No 16**

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

**Organisation:** Blue Mountains Unions Council Inc

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Following a recent meeting of the Blue Mountains Union and Community organisation it was agreed to communicate the following submission relating to the NSW Public Works Committee Inquiry into the costs for remediation of sites containing coal ash repositories. Our submission is based on consultations with the local community and environmental research information relating to this matter.

The communities and environments are at risk from the inability of state agencies to comprehensively, consistently and effectively remediate and rehabilitate coal ash dams/sites. Many sites are situated close to communities or those who live close by. We urge the Public Works Committee to hold hearings for the inquiry in those communities, including NSW Central Coast, Lithgow and the Lower Hunter Valley.

1) We understand the current regulatory system for coal ash management in NSW to be totally inadequate. The most effective way to ensure coal ash sites are comprehensively managed, remediated and rehabilitated is by developing coal ash site specific Regulations under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act.

We urge the Committee to call for the development of Protection of the Environment (Coal Ash) Regulation. This Regulation must contain the following minimum standards.

- a. Develop and implement standards for ash repository management and remediation consistent with international best practice. The standards should apply to both active and inactive, open and closed ash dumps. The formulation of these standards should involve stakeholders, including impacted local communities. The standards should be enforced by the EPA;
- b. The NSW Government provide public access to all ground water monitoring data (current and historical) via a website similar to that used by EPA for air pollution monitoring. Data should be interpreted through reference to current best practice international standards;
- c. Contains a mechanism that requires EPLs for ash repositories in NSW be amended to incorporate the state-wide ash repository management and remediation standards.
- d. Requires coal ash operators to prepare comprehensive rehabilitation and closure plans.
- e. Mechanisms that require the Dam/Site Safety Committee to make publicly available the annual inspection reports and five yearly surveillance reports produced by coal ash repository operations.
- f. Mechanisms that require the NSW EPA conduct regular unannounced audits of coal ash repositories, inspecting the management and remediation of each repository at least twice yearly.
- g. Mechanisms that require the NSW EPA to publish and make annual reports on the reuse of coal ash from repositories, including the quantity of coal generated at each power station, the destination and purpose of all coal ash transferred for reuse.
- h. Mechanisms that require each coal ash site operators to report annually the testing conducted on coal ash reused for other purposes.

- 2) Baseline studies be undertaken by the NSW Government with respect to existing contamination at the currently operational power stations during the Sale and Purchase Agreement period be made publicly available.
- 3) In the event that the above mentioned baseline studies do not contain prospective quantum associated with remediation for pre-sale contamination, an estimation of that quantum be established and made publicly available.
- 4) The NSW Government release annual reports to the NSW Parliament that quantify the state's liability for remediation and rehabilitation of coal ash dump sites.
- 5) The NSW Government conduct and publish an audit of the extent of coal ash reuse from the state's five operations coal-fired power stations during the last 10 years, identifying the power stations where the coal ash was generated and the quantities, destinations and purposes of all the coal ash transferred for reuse.