Submission No 19

INQUIRY INTO COSTS FOR REMEDIATION OF SITES CONTAINING COAL ASH REPOSITORIES

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WATER & ECOSYSTEM CONTAMINATION IS OCCURRING FROM LEACHING COAL-ASH DUMPS AND POWER STATION DISCHARGE… Just a fraction of the large number of heavy metals that are released from Lake Macquarie's power stations into the environment have concentration limits in place Neither the Vales Point or Eraring ash dumps have dam liners to prevent leaching and the contamination of groundwater Exceedences of environmental trigger points for groundwater concentrations of the following metals have been identified at Vales Point and Eraring: arsenic, cadmium, selenium, chromium, lead, mercury, copper, zinc and nickel Heavy metals bio-accumulate and magnify up food chains, impairing the reproduction of native bird and fish species The consumption of Mud Crab, Blue Swimmer Crab from Lake Macquarie could result in over-exposure to cadmium, and children are at risk of over-exposure to selenium from Fin-fish consumption Our pilot study into ecosystem exposure found that shorebirds in Mannering Bay contain high heavy metal levels, meaning the toxic substances from the ash dams are travelling into the ecosystem Coal-ash can be beneficially reused in cement, building and manufacturing products which are in high demand THERE ARE TANGIBLE SOLUTIONS TO LAKE MACQUARIE'S HEAVY METAL PROBLEMS THAT THE INQUIRY MUST CONSIDER… The NSW EPA amend the Eraring (EPL 1429) and Vales Point (EPL 761) EPLs so that the maximum concentrations limits for water discharge are in line with the ANZECC (2000) guidelines The NSW Government commit to decontaminating the Vales Point and Eraring power station sites The NSW Government ensure there are adequate funds set aside to decontaminate the sites comprehensively The NSW Government carry out feasibility study into the environmentally responsible reuse of coal ash, with an aim of setting up a pilot plant so that Lake Macquarie's coal-ash sites may be returned to wetlands habitat in the future