

**Submission
No 48**

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

Organisation: Coal Point Progress Association

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Coal Point Progress Association Inc.

PO Box 329, Toronto

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<http://coalpointprogress.blogspot.com.au/>



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Submission on Costs for remediation of sites containing coal ash repositories

Dear Chair Mookhey and members of the Inquiry,

The Coal Point Progress Association has been a part of the community since 1946 advocating on issues that affect our community. A significant proportion of our community arrived in the area having been recruited as miners from Lithgow in the 1950s. The stacks from Wangi and Eraring Power Stations are daily reminders of the proximity and links to the mining-power industries that shaped our community.

The proposed closure of Eraring in 2032 provides unique opportunities to create new industries, retain meaningful employment within our community and address a toxic legacy of the coal-ash dams. Thorough remediation would create a viable coal-ash reuse industry, return valuable land back into safe use and ensure environmental restoration in growth areas of the City.

The coal-ash in Eraring's ash-dam, is concentrated in heavy metals and toxins. This coal-ash is mixed with water and 'stored' in unlined ash dams, where the toxic cocktail leaches into the groundwater, the contamination flowing into Lake Macquarie with our ecosystems being impacted and heavy metals concentrating in lake seafood such as crabs, prawns and fin-fish and anything that eats them...birds, people.

The current licenses on operational and coal-ash remediation are decades behind international standards and are exceptionally poorly regulated, resulting in short and long-term health impacts which are responsible for 300 death/year (Out of the Ashes report).

We call upon the Inquiry to direct the NSW EPA to 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 and commit the NSW government to decontaminating the Vales Point and Eraring power station sites and ongoing monitoring.

To ensure the best possible outcomes for the local community, reforms on the safe operation of coal-ash dumps are required and we request the Inquiry consider including the following items in the remediation and monitoring process

- Groundwater monitoring for all contaminants at the boundary of the ash dam
- Stringent limits on toxic pollutants in groundwater
- Closure of all unlined wet coal ash basins

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- Groundwater restoration when contamination limits is exceeded
 - Engineering controls and siting restrictions for ash-dams
 - Structural stability standards
 - Safe closure of all coal-ash dumps, with monitoring for 30 years including corrective measures for breaches
 - Financial assurance for clean-up on closure
 - Public access to data

Our high value waterfront properties and lake ecosystems are in danger of contamination from breaches associated with coal-ash dam stability, compounded by underground mining, as evidenced by the closure of the Myuna Bay Sport and Rec facility in 2019. We request the Inquiry seek commitment from The NSW Government to ensure there are adequate funds set aside to decontaminate the sites comprehensively.

These measures are something our community deserves as the coal-ash dam clean-up associated with the closure of Eraring and Vales Point looms in the next decade.

Thorough remediation of the coal-ash dumps not only benefit personal and ecosystem health it could also provide opportunities to create jobs in the remediation of the sites, utilising existing skill sets of an industry in transition. The more thorough the clean-up the more jobs created, which has the potential to release 3000ha of waterfront land back to the community, remove the threat of ash-dam wall collapse, along with protecting the long-term health of the environment and community and generating new local industry in coal-ash reuse.

Regards

Suzanne Pritchard
President
Coal Point Progress Association
