

**Submission  
No 58**

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

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My name is Renee McLean. I currently live in Raworth in Maitland, but I grew up at Valentine and Warners Bay. I still visit the lake often, and am a member of Warners Bay Landcare.

During my lifetime I have watched the water quality in Lake Macquarie improve and seen some of the environmental benefits of this change for residents, ecosystems and wildlife. I am very proud of the slow and considered hard work that our communities have undertaken to do this. Many people have worked very hard to make this happen, and local and state government funds have been spent to invest in this important process.

The storage and clean up of Eraring and Vales Point coal ash sites is a very important community issue. Neither the Vales Point or Eraring ash dumps have dam liners to prevent leaching and the contamination of groundwater, which is a terrible and unnecessary situation. Arsenic, cadmium, selenium, chromium, lead, mercury, copper, zinc and nickel have been leeching into our lake and impacting on food chains and lifecycles 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. Shorebirds in Mannering Bay contain high heavy metal levels, meaning the toxic substances from the ash dams are travelling into the ecosystem.

Since the creation of these dams, technology has advanced greatly in the storage of this waste and our old leaking dams need to be made safer - not just capping them, but making sure they cannot contaminate ground water. We need a plan and committed funding to remediate these sites. Remediation should not only provide the community with protection from coal ash pollution, but where possible should deliver jobs for local people and explore environmentally responsible re-use of coal ash.

I call on the inquiry to consider:

~ that 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

~ that the NSW Government commit to decontaminating the Vales Point and Eraring power station sites

~ that 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