

**Submission
No 72**

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

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INQUIRY INTO THE COSTS FOR REMEDIATION OF SITES CONTAINING COAL ASH REPOSITORIES 2019

As a concerned Lake Macquarie resident and grandmother, I believe it is now time for the NSW government to approach the subject of ash dam remediation, on the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie regions.

For over 50 years Coal-ash has been allowed to build up and leach into our waterways and groundwater from unlined dams. During strong winds fine particles containing heavy metals become airborne providing a toxic cocktail for the community and leaving those with respiratory illness confined to the indoors, to avoid further health problems. Residents of the Wangi and Myuna area are not only subjected to fall out from the stacks but also to a covering of white dust on a regular basis, this being the coal-ash.

The closure of Myuna Bay Sport and Rec Centre attests to the dangers associated with this toxic Coal-ash. If Origin and the NSW government consider the dangers too high for the Rec Centre to remain open, why then has there been no consideration to the Lake itself? Why are they now expanding the dam and only adding to the problem? Why are they about to mine underneath the ash dam potentially further compromising the stability of the dam? Furthermore, we are advised to limit our consumption of seafood from the lake as well as advised not to eat Mud Crabs due to the high cadmium content present; this also proves that we are dealing with toxic substances that have been and are still allowed to pollute our lake.

Eraring and Vales Point power stations have contributed to over 60 million tonnes of toxic ash which are stored in unlined dams on the shores of Lake Macquarie. Planning for the future and remediation of these sites is paramount, instead of allowing this to continue to build up over the remaining lifespan of these power stations, hence only compounding the problem. This needs to happen now, not after closure of these power stations.

For many years now coal-ash is known to be used in concrete and for agricultural purposes. Some may even consider that it is highly prized for its ability to strengthen concrete. If this is the case, why do we have 60 million tonnes of it destroying the lake Macquarie environment as well as risking the health of the local community and tourists to this area? The reuse rate is less than 35% in comparison to Japan whose reuse rate is 97%. To my knowledge, Boral has an exclusive contract to reuse this ash. This obviously does little to alleviate the impacts to the environment. If other companies were allowed to use this product this would increase overall employment opportunities as well as substantially assist in the rehabilitation process. At a recent Power and Pollution Summit it was suggested that this ash could be used to form a lightweight aggregate. The high firing process used in it's formation would ensure that the heavy metals contained in the coal-ash are locked in and therefore posing no risk to the environment and the community. This ideally would be a win for further employment as well as the environment.

The community have a right to clean air and to enjoy the many recreational activities that Lake Macquarie provides without compromising their health. Therefore, it is imperative that the NSW government take some form of leadership; plan, and take action to clean up this mess and stop treating Lake Macquarie and The Central Coast region as a dumping ground for this toxic pollution.

Yours faithfully
Tonia Gardiner