

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Thank you for the opportunity to have my say on the impacts of coal ash dumps and power stations on Lake Macquarie. As a Newcastle resident with extended family living in the Lake Macquarie area, I'm greatly concerned by the levels of heavy metals that have been found to be leaching from coal ash dumps around Vales Point and Eraring Power Stations, including arsenic in groundwater and sediment, severe copper contamination, and levels of lead exceeding guidelines for both drinking water and recreational use. My niece and her family regularly water ski on the lake near Toronto; my uncle kayaks at Sunshine and Balcolyn, close to Eraring. Our friends and family spend a lot of the summer swimming in the lake, but it sounds like this could now be a health hazard.

The Out of The Ashes report by Hunter Community Environment Centre has found that consumption of crab from Lake Macquarie could result in over-exposure to cadmium and that fin-fish consumption over-exposure to selenium.

I understand Australia is decades behind global standards in coal ash remediation, with much weaker limits than other countries. This issue needs to be addressed urgently. Capping dams isn't enough to prevent contamination of the environment surrounding coal ash dams.

Recommendations for action include:

- Dam liners for all coal ash dams to prevent leaching and groundwater contamination
- Concentration limits for all heavy metals
- 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 set aside adequate funds to thoroughly decontaminate the Eraring and Vales Point power station sites
- Feasibility studies are conducted to investigate reusing coal ash in cement and building products
- Power stations must guarantee funding for rehabilitation until the EPA and communities have confirmed the sites are stable

Use of coal ash in industry could generate income for communities and be a source of employment, with workers gaining skills transferrable to mining rehabilitation and vice versa. I request a clean air strategy for NSW and transparency of information regarding coal ash pollution of groundwater, with a plan to both modify the current coal ash dumps, and to assist in the rehabilitation of the ecosystems that are already being affected by this pollution.